

2011-2012
TOPS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

For

HIGH SCHOOL

STUDENTS AND COUNSELORS

PRESENTED BY

LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE (LOSFA)

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IMPORTANT

CHANGES TO TOPS CORE CURRICULUM

**FOR THE TOPS OPPORTUNITY, PERFORMANCE AND HONORS AWARDS
FOR
HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES OF 2014 AND THEREAFTER**

Students who entered the ninth (9th) grade in the 2010-2011 academic year and later should pay close attention to this new core curriculum requirement.

Beginning with students graduating in 2014, the TOPS core curriculum has been changed. Students will be required to complete 19 units from the TOPS Core Curriculum that must include the following:

- 4 – English
- 4 – Math
- 4 – Science
- 4 – Social Studies
- 1 – Fine Arts Survey
- 2 – Foreign Language

19 TOTAL UNITS

The ½ unit in computer will no longer be required.

See the Chart on the next page for the courses allowed in the TOPS Core for 2014 and thereafter.

TOPS CORE CURRICULUM
FOR THE TOPS OPPORTUNITY, PERFORMANCE AND HONORS AWARDS
FOR HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES OF 2014 AND THEREAFTER

As of September 12, 2011

Units	Course ¹ 2
ENGLISH = 4 Units	
(1 Unit)	English I
(1 Unit)	English II
(1 Unit)	English III
(1 Unit)	English IV
MATH = 4 Units	
(1 Unit)	Algebra I (1 unit) or Integrated Mathematics I or Applied Algebra I or Applied Algebra 1A and 1B (both for 1 unit) or Algebra I – Part I and Algebra I – Part 2 (both for 1 unit) or Applied Mathematics I and Applied Mathematics II (both for 1 unit)
(1 Unit)	Algebra II or Integrated Mathematics II
(2 Units)	Geometry or Calculus or Applied Geometry or Integrated Mathematics III or Applied Mathematics III or Advanced Math–Pre-Calculus or Advanced Math–Functions and Statistics or Pre-Calculus or Probability and Statistics or Discrete Mathematics or Algebra III
SCIENCE = 4 Units	
(1 Unit)	Biology I or Biology II
(1 Unit)	Chemistry I or Chemistry Com or Chemistry II
(2 Units)	Earth Science or Environmental Science or Integrated Science or Physical Science or Biology II or Chemistry II or Anatomy and Physiology or Physics or Physics II or Physics for Technology I or Physics for Technology II or Agriscience I and II (both for 1 unit)
SOCIAL STUDIES = 4 Units	
(1 Unit)	U.S. History (formerly American History)
(2 Units)	World History, Western Civilization or World Geography or European History or History of Religion
(1 Unit)	Civics and Free Enterprise (one unit combined) or Civics (one unit) or AP American Government (one unit)
FINE ARTS = 1 Unit	
(1 Unit)	Fine Arts Survey; (or substitute 1 unit performance courses in music, dance, or theater; or 1 unit of studio art or 1 unit of visual art; or Speech III and Speech IV (both for 1 unit)
FOREIGN LANGUAGE = 2 Units	
(2 Units)	Foreign Language, both units in the same language
TOTAL = 19 Units	

1 Advanced Placement (AP) courses with the same name as a course listed in the TOPS Core Curriculum may be substituted.

2 Includes courses designated as equivalents.



TOPS Core Curriculum

For the Opportunity, Performance, and Honors Awards

For High School graduates of 2012 and 2013

Units	Courses
4	English I, II, III, & IV
1	Algebra I, or Integrated Mathematics I, or Applied Algebra I or Algebra I - Parts 1 & 2 (two units) or Applied Mathematics I & II (two units)
1	Algebra II or Integrated Mathematics II
1	Geometry, Applied Geometry, Pre-Calculus, Advanced Math-Pre-Calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus AB, Advanced Math-Functions and Statistics, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics III, Integrated Mathematics III, or Algebra III
1	Biology I or II
1	Chemistry I or II, or Chemistry Com
1	Anatomy and Physiology, Earth Science, Physical Science, Environmental Science, Integrated Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II, Physics for Technology I or II, AP Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism, AP Physics C: Mechanics or both Agriscience I & II (for one unit)
1	Additional Math or Science : Geometry, Applied Geometry, Pre-Calculus, Advanced Math-Pre-calculus, Calculus, AP Calculus AB, Advanced Math-Functions and Statistics, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics III, Integrated Mathematics III, Algebra III, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II, AP Physics C: Electricity & Magnetism, AP Physics C: Mechanics or Anatomy and Physiology
1	American History
1	Civics and Free Enterprise (1 unit combined), Civics (1 year) or AP Government and Politics: United States
1	World History, Western Civilization, World Geography, or European History
2	Foreign Language (2 units in the same language) or American Sign Language I & II
1	Fine Arts Survey (1 unit) or 2 units performance courses in music, dance or theater or 2 units studio art or 2 units visual art or both Speech III & IV or both Agriscience I & II or substitute 1 unit of an elective from among the other subjects listed in this core curriculum
½	Computer Science I or II, Computer Technology Literacy, Business Computer Applications, Introduction to Business Computer Applications, or Computer Science Elective or substitute (<i>the following courses can only be used to substitute for the Computer Science requirement</i>) Advanced Technical Drafting, Computer Applications, Computer/Technology Applications, Computer Architecture, Computer Electronics I or II, Computer Systems and Networking I or II, Desktop Publishing, Digital Graphics & Animation, Multimedia Productions, Computer Multimedia Presentations, Technology Education Computer Applications, Telecommunications, Web Mastering, Web Design, Word Processing, Independent Study in Technology Applications, AP Computer Science A, AP Computer Science AB, Database Design & Programming, Database Programming with PL/SQL Training, Java Programming or substitute 1/2 unit of an elective from among the other subjects listed in the core curriculum
TOTAL: 17.5 units	



This core curriculum is accurate as of the date of publication and includes courses listed in TOPS statute and those determined to be equivalent by the La. Board of Regents and BESE.

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TOPS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

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TOPS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

“ACT” AND “SAT” TEST

Q-1. What is the minimum ACT for 2012 high school graduates and does the score change every year?

- A. The ACT qualifying scores for students graduating from eligible Louisiana high schools in 2012 are:
TOPS Tech – 17 or the silver level score on the assessments of the ACT WorkKeys system
TOPS Opportunity – 20
TOPS Performance - 23
TOPS Honors - 27

The minimum qualifying score for the **Opportunity Award** is determined annually based on the state's average composite ACT score reported for the prior year (the average for last year was 20.2). The TOPS statute provides that the required score is calculated by rounding the state's average composite ACT score reported for the prior year to the nearest whole number. The minimum score may never be less than 20 and is currently 20.

Q-2. What is the minimum ACT for students completing a BESE approved home study program for 2011?

- A. The ACT qualifying scores for home study students for 2012 are:
TOPS Tech – 19
TOPS Opportunity – 22
TOPS Performance – 24*
TOPS Honors – 28*

* Students who complete a BESE approved home study program are not eligible for the Performance and Honors awards if the Louisiana residency requirement is met based on a parent who is a Louisiana resident living outside the United States who actively engaged in work or another activity on behalf of a Louisiana sponsor or employer after having lived in Louisiana at least 24 months prior to starting work out of the country.

Q-3. What is the minimum ACT for 2012 graduates of out-of state and out-of-country high schools*?

- A. The ACT qualifying scores for these 2012 graduates, who must qualify under alternate eligibility criteria for 2012, are:
TOPS Tech – 20
TOPS Opportunity – 23
TOPS Performance – 26*
TOPS Honors – 30*

* Students who graduate from out-of-country high schools are not eligible for TOPS Performance and TOPS Honors awards if the Louisiana residency requirement is met based on a parent who is a Louisiana resident living outside the United States who actively engaged in work or another activity on behalf of a Louisiana sponsor or employer after having lived in Louisiana at least 24 months prior to starting work out of the country.

Q-4. What is the deadline for taking the ACT/SAT?

- A. You must achieve a qualifying score on or before the ACT national test date in April in the academic year you graduate from high school. If you have not previously achieved a qualifying score, you may qualify after the ACT national test date in April in the academic year you graduate from high school, but prior to

July 1, by using May and/or June test scores, including scores from a special ACT or SAT, but your period of eligibility for the award will be reduced by one semester or two quarters. You can only qualify for a higher award using a score achieved after the national ACT test date in April and before July 1 if you have not qualified for any TOPS award or have qualified for the TOPS Tech Award.

Q-5. Will a score from a special ACT or SAT taken after the official April test date but before July 1 be accepted?

A. Yes. You may use a first time qualifying score achieved on a special ACT or SAT test after the official April test date and before the July 1 deadline, but your eligibility will be reduced by one semester or two quarters.

Q-6. Is any type of ACT or SAT test acceptable?

A. No. You must take an official National, International, Military, Arranged, or Special ACT test or the SAT test.

Q-7. Should I include my social security number on my ACT or SAT application?

A. Yes. When you register for a national or international ACT test date, you will be assigned an ACT ID number. **You should still provide your social security number.** LOSFA uses your social security number to match your ACT or SAT scores with your high school grades and your TOPS application. Without the social security number matching on all three, your TOPS eligibility cannot be determined. Failure to include your social security number will greatly delay and could totally prevent processing for TOPS eligibility.

If you did not provide your social security number, you may have it added to future reports if you so request by writing ACT Records, 301 ACT Drive, Post Office Box 451, Iowa City, IA 52243-0451.

Q-8. How does the new ACT essay component impact TOPS eligibility?

A. The essay portion of the ACT test does not impact the ACT composite score, and therefore will not affect TOPS eligibility. However, some colleges and universities require the essay. Check with the admissions office of the school(s) to which you intend to apply.

Q-9. Is the SAT Essay test considered in the conversion of the SAT score to an ACT score for TOPS eligibility?

A. No. The essay portion of the SAT is not considered for TOPS eligibility.

Q-10. How is the ACT score reported to LOSFA?

A. LOSFA has an agreement with ACT, Inc. that requires ACT, Inc. to electronically report to LOSFA all ACT test scores for students who indicate they are a resident of Louisiana and all students who included the TOPS report code of “1595” in the list of institutions to receive the test scores when registering for the ACT.

If you take the ACT outside Louisiana and do not include code “1595” on the list of institutions to receive test scores, you should either mail LOSFA a copy of the score report (must include the student’s name and social security number), or call LOSFA at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012, and provide the information. LOSFA will verify the score and test date through ACT.

We do not recommend that you pay to send a MAILGRAM. We can verify your ACT score and test date

without a fee or delay to you.

Q-11. Will LOSFA waive ACT scores for a child with ADD or ADHD?

A. No. The minimum ACT score is established by the TOPS statute and cannot be waived. You may apply to ACT, Inc. for special testing conditions, but you must take the test no later than the deadline.

Q-12. I listed the incorrect ACT high school code or the incorrect year of graduation, or graduated from a different high school than the one I attended when I took the ACT test that resulted in the highest score. What do I do to correct this?

A. High school codes for in-state high school graduates will be provided through the State Department of Education's Student Transcript System (STS), and therefore, you do not have to correct your ACT report. If you graduated out-of-state/country or from an approved home study program or were in the military and you have applied for TOPS, contact a LOSFA Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012, or e-mail custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-13. Can an SAT score be used in place of an ACT score, and if so, what is the minimum qualifying score?

A. Yes. To qualify for the TOPS award, the total of the sub-scores for the critical reading and mathematics sections of the SAT (the score for the writing section is NOT included) must be at least:
Tech Award – 820
Opportunity Award – 940
Performance Award – 1050
Honors Award – 1210

Q-14. What are the SAT test deadlines?

A. The SAT test deadlines for TOPS are the same as the test deadlines for the ACT, which is April in the academic year you graduate from high school, or May and June with a one semester (or two quarters) reduction in eligibility for the award.

Q-15. How do I substitute an SAT score?

A. To substitute an SAT score, you must take the test no later than the ACT test deadline (April in the year of high school graduation or achieve a qualifying score for the first time from a May and/or June test, which reduces your eligibility for the award by one semester or two quarters), and you must direct the College Board to electronically report the score to LOSFA within 45 days of the date you take the test, or you must personally send a copy of your SAT test report to LOSFA. LOSFA uses a conversion table to determine the ACT equivalent of the SAT score. See the answer to Question 13 above.

When registering for the SAT, you must indicate the Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Program for Students code as a recipient of the score by entering code "9019" as one of the institutions to receive a score report.

If you take the SAT outside Louisiana and do not include code "9019" on the list of institutions to receive test scores, you should either mail LOSFA a copy of the score report (must include the student's name and social security number), or call a LOSFA Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012 or e-mail custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-16. If I qualified for a TOPS Tech Award and take the June ACT or SAT, can I increase the level of my TOPS award?

- A. Yes. You may qualify for a higher award based on the ACT or SAT score achieved on the June ACT or SAT. Because the test is taken after the April national ACT test date, your eligibility for the award will be reduced by one semester or two quarters.

Q-17. If I have an ACT score that will qualify me for a TOPS Opportunity or Performance Award and I take the ACT or the SAT after the official April ACT test date, can my award be upgraded?

- A. No. If you have already qualified for a TOPS Opportunity or Performance Award, you cannot upgrade the award based on a score achieved after the national April ACT test date. Only if you have not qualified for any TOPS Award or if you have qualified for the TOPS Tech Award can you qualify for a higher award using a score achieved after the national ACT test date in April and before July 1, but your eligibility for the award will be reduced by one semester or two quarters.

APPLICATION PROCESS

Q-18. What is the application for TOPS?

- A. Beginning with 2004 high school graduates, to apply for a TOPS scholarship, you must submit one of the following:
1. You must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) unless you can demonstrate that you do not qualify for federal grant aid (Pell Grant). We recommend that all students submit the FAFSA. The most direct way to file the FAFSA is via the Internet at www.fafsa.ed.gov. The paper FAFSA may also be used.

FAFSA on the Web:

If you have any problems with filing the FAFSA on the Web at www.fafsa.ed.gov, including problems obtaining or using the **Personal Identification Number** (PIN) from Federal Student Aid, you should contact the FAFSA hotline at 1-800-433-3243 for assistance. Both you and one of your parents must have and use a PIN to submit the FAFSA on the Web.

Once the application has been submitted, the Web site will prompt you to print and keep a copy of the confirmation page. **MAKE SURE YOU COMPLETE THE PROCESS BY SUBMITTING THE APPLICATION AND PRINTING THE CONFIRMATION PAGE. IF THE CONFIRMATION PAGE DOES NOT APPEAR, THE APPLICATION HAS NOT BEEN SUBMITTED.** SAVE THE PRINTOUT OF THE CONFIRMATION PAGE TO PROVE THE DATE THE APPLICATION WAS SUBMITTED.

You should receive a **Student Aid Report** (SAR) confirming the receipt of the application within a few days. You should retain a copy of the SAR.

Paper FAFSA:

If you submit the FAFSA on the paper form, keep a copy of the FAFSA and send the FAFSA via certified or registered mail so that there is proof of the date mailed. You should receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) confirming the receipt of the application within a few weeks. Retain a copy of the SAR.

If you have any concerns about your FAFSA or whether it was received by the federal processor, you may call the FAFSA hotline at 1-800-433-3243 for assistance.

For a paper FAFSA, call the FAFSA hotline at 1-800-433-3243 or print it from the FAFSA on the Web site.

2. If you can demonstrate that you do not qualify for federal grant aid, you may submit the TOPS On-Line Application on the LOSFA Web site (<https://www.osfa.la.gov/TOPSONlineapp>). The On-Line Application requires you to certify that you do not qualify for federal grant aid, and to certify your citizenship, residency and criminal conviction status. Once the application has been submitted, PRINT AND SAVE A COPY OF THE CONFIRMATION to prove the date you submitted the application.

If you only file the TOPS On Line Application, you will be the first to lose your award in the event of a budget shortfall.

If you experience problems filing your TOPS On Line Application, contact a LOSFA Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012, or e-mail custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-19. What is the deadline for applying for TOPS?

- A Starting with students graduating in 2009, the only deadline for receipt of a TOPS application for the full TOPS award is July 1, or the next business day if July 1 falls on a weekend, following the one year anniversary of high school graduation. If you are a 2012 high school graduate, you must file your application so that it is received by the federal processor by July 1, 2013, to receive TOPS funding. However, no payment of a TOPS award will be made until the initial FAFSA or on-line application has been received and you have been determined eligible for a TOPS award.

If the your initial FAFSA or on-line application is received after July 1 immediately following your graduation from high school, the payment of your TOPS award could be delayed depending on the date your application is received and the date you enroll for the first time as a full-time student in an eligible college or university.

If you enroll for the first time as a full-time student before your FAFSA or on-line application is received, you must meet the TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements to receive payments of your TOPS award after the first semester, quarter or term of your full-time enrollment at an eligible college or university.

If you are a 2012 high school graduate and your initial application is received from July 2, 2013 through August 30, 2013, you will be eligible to receive seven semesters of TOPS funding beginning with the 2012-2013 academic year. You must also meet TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements if you attend college during the 2012-2013 academic year.

If you are a 2012 high school graduate and your application is received from August 31, 2013 through October 29, 2013, you will be eligible to receive six semesters of TOPS funding beginning with the 2012-2013 academic year. You must also meet TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements if you attend college during the 2012-2013 academic year.

If you are a 2012 high school graduate and your application is received after October 29, 2013, you are ineligible for any TOPS award. There are no exceptions, waivers or appeals.

Q-20. Is there a different deadline to file a FAFSA for a high school graduate who first enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible Louisiana college and then enrolls in an out-of-state college?

- A. No. The deadline is the same as for all other students who enroll for the first time as full-time students in eligible Louisiana colleges.

Q-21. Is there a different deadline to file a FAFSA for a high school graduate who first enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible out-of-state college?

- A. Yes. If you otherwise meet the TOPS requirements, including the academic and enrollment requirements

for continuation of the award, your FAFSA must be received by July 1 immediately following the academic year you enroll in an eligible Louisiana college. Beginning with the 2007-2008 academic year, your application will be accepted if it is received no later than 60 days after the July 1st deadline, but your award will be reduced by one semester. If your application is received more than 61 but no later than 120 days after the July 1st deadline, your award will be reduced by two semesters. (See Questions 44, 148, 149 and 154 for eligibility requirements for students who attend out-of-state colleges.)

For example, you are a 2012 high school graduate and you enroll for the first time as a full-time student at an accredited out-of-state college for the fall semester of 2012 and then you enroll as a full-time student at an eligible Louisiana college for the spring semester of 2013. Your deadline would be July 1, 2013 for the full award or no later than 120 days after the July 1 deadline for a reduced award.

Q-22. Is there a different deadline to file a FAFSA for a high school graduate who joins the U.S. Armed Forces and enters on active duty within one year of graduation?

- A. Yes. If you enter on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces within one year of graduation and before you enroll as a full-time college student, your FAFSA must be received by the federal processor no later than one year from the date you separated from active duty.

Note that you must enroll as a first-time, full-time student no later than the semester or term immediately following the five year anniversary of your graduation from high school or the one year anniversary of your date of separation, whichever is earlier. If your initial enlistment is extended (voluntarily or involuntarily) so that your initial enrollment in college is later than five years after high school graduation, you may apply for an exception to the initial enrollment requirement. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the required documentation can be found on the LOSFA Web site (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform) or obtained directly from LOSFA. If you re-enlist, this exception is not available and you will not be eligible to receive a TOPS award.

Q-23. What happens if a military member fails to apply by the deadline?

- A. If the federal processor receives your FAFSA or if you complete the On-Line Application after the deadline but within 120 days of the deadline, and you have met all the other TOPS eligibility requirements, you will be eligible for a TOPS Award reduced by one or two semesters of eligibility. If the FAFSA or On-Line Application is late from one to 60 days, your award will be reduced by one semester of eligibility. If the FAFSA or On-Line Application is 61 to 120 days late, your award will be reduced by two semesters of eligibility.

If the FAFSA or On-Line Application is 121 or more days late, you are ineligible for a TOPS award.

Q-24. Is there a certain year FAFSA that I must file? If so, how do I know that I am completing the correct year FAFSA?

- A. You should submit a FAFSA for the academic year immediately following your graduation from high school. This will ensure you are considered for a TOPS award even you do not enroll in a Louisiana college the academic year after you graduate. You should submit the FAFSA even if you intend to enroll at an out-of-state college or sit out a year before enrolling in a Louisiana college. For example: If you are a 2012 graduate, you should submit the FAFSA for the 2012-2013 academic year.

Q-25. Is the FAFSA the only form I need to fill out to apply for TOPS?

- A. Yes, in most cases. Some applicants may be required to submit other documentation, such as: high school and college transcripts, residency affidavits and required supporting documentation, the Application to Return from an Out-of-State College for students returning from out-of-state colleges, permanent residency

or citizenship documentation, etc. If additional information is required to process your application, LOSFA will ask you for the documentation required.

Q-26. My parents told me that they cannot complete their taxes by the state deadline for TOPS of July 1 and they are applying by completing the FAFSA. What should I do?

- A. There is a question on the FAFSA that permits you to report whether your parents have filed or will file a federal tax return. If your parents indicate that they will file a return, they should complete the income questions based on their best estimate using W-2 forms, year-end accounting reports, or other income reports. See the FAFSA instructions for guidance.

Q-27. Who is eligible to file a TOPS On-Line Application?

- A. You can only file the TOPS On-Line Application if you can demonstrate that you do not qualify for federal grant aid because of your family's financial condition. You can determine if you may qualify for federal grant aid by using FinAid's Financial Aid Estimator available on the Internet at www.finaid.org/calculators or the U.S. Department of Education's FAFSA4caster at www.fafsa4caster.ed.gov/.

Beware: You and your parents should be aware that students who file the TOPS On-Line Application will be the first eliminated from the TOPS program in the event the legislature does not appropriate sufficient funds to pay a TOPS award to all eligible students. You and your parents should also be aware that you will not be considered for any federal financial aid programs, including Pell and other federal grants, student loans and the federal work study program.

Q-28. Must I reapply for TOPS after each semester or once a year?

- A. You must file a FAFSA or a renewal FAFSA annually so that it is received by the final deadline of July 1, or the next business day if July 1 falls on a weekend, **every academic year** unless you can demonstrate that you do not qualify for federal grant aid because of your family's financial condition. If you can demonstrate that you do not qualify for federal grant aid because of your family's financial condition, you are not required to submit a renewal FAFSA; however, in the event of a budgetary shortfall, your award will be the first eliminated from the TOPS program. TOPS does not provide a grace period after the July 1 deadline for a continuing student to file a FAFSA or renewal FAFSA.

A correction can be made to a FAFSA at anytime and do not change the original FAFSA receipt date.

Q-29. How is LOSFA able to determine which high school I attended if the FAFSA does not have a section for this information to be conveyed?

- A. If you graduated from a BESE approved public or non-public high school, the Louisiana Department of Education through its Student Transcript System (STS) will report to LOSFA what high school you attended.

If you graduated from an out-of-state or out-of-country high school or completed a BESE approved home study program, you report this information on your ACT or SAT registration form. You may receive a letter from LOSFA requesting additional information regarding the high school you attended, Louisiana residency, citizenship, etc. to begin the TOPS eligibility process.

Q-30. If I submitted my paper Free Application for Federal Student Aid, sent the information by UPS overnight delivery and have the receipt that it was delivered by July 1, but the federal application receipt date is July 3, what should I do?

- A. You should submit to LOSFA a copy of the proof of mailing along with a written explanation of the above

circumstances. We encourage you to obtain and retain proof of mailing if the electronic application is not used. The TOPS rules limit proof of mailing to:

1. A certificate of mailing, registered, certified, certified/return receipt requested, priority or overnight mail receipt from the U.S. Postal Service, or other authorized mail carriers such as UPS and Federal Express, which is dated prior to the state's final deadline.
2. The Student Aid Report (SAR) or the Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR), produced by the federal processor, shows that the original application was received by the state's final deadline.
3. The federal processor provides verbal or written verification to LASFAC that the original application was received by the state's final deadline.
4. A printed copy of the electronic receipt for a FAFSA filed on the Web shows that the original application was received by the final deadline.
5. A printed copy of the electronic receipt for an On-Line Application shows that the original application was received by the final deadline.
6. The LOSFA's On-Line Application submission confirmation code corresponds to a LOSFA database transaction by the final deadline.

No other form of verification, including notarized or certified statements, will be accepted as proof of compliance with the deadline requirement.

Q-31. If I submitted a FAFSA on the Web but the federal processor does not report it to LOSFA or the federal processor has no record of the application, what documentation can I use as proof of compliance?

- A. You should keep the following documentation as evidence of having filed the FAFSA electronically:
1. A printed copy of the FAFSA that was transmitted showing a date of entry prior to the state's final deadline; or
 2. A printed copy of the confirmation showing the FAFSA was received, having a date of entry prior to the state's final deadline; or
 3. Confirmation from the federal processor that the application was received by the state's final deadline.
 4. Correspondence from the federal processor confirming that electronic problems/issues prevented processing.

Q-32. Is there a fee charged with or associated with filing the FAFSA?

- A. No, federal law prohibits the charging of a fee to file the FAFSA (FREE Application for Federal Student Aid). To avoid fees and possible scams, you should file the FAFSA directly to the federal processor through the Internet at www.fafsa.ed.gov or submit the paper form directly to the federal processor.

If a Web site charges a fee for filing the FAFSA, it is highly unlikely that you will receive any benefit for paying the fee. The Web sites that do charge fees for filing the FAFSA are not associated with the federal government and filing a FAFSA through them may result in delays processing the FAFSA and unnecessary expenses.

Check carefully to ensure that you are using the correct Web site before entering your personal and family data.

AWARD AMOUNTS

Q-33. How much does the TOPS Opportunity Award pay to pursue an academic undergraduate degree?

- A. If you enroll in a Louisiana public postsecondary institution, TOPS pays an amount equal to the tuition and the mandatory fees in effect on January 1, 1998, plus any additional tuition and fees after that date authorized by the legislature to be paid by TOPS. Fees that are not paid by TOPS include: the Technology

Fee authorized by Act 1450 of the 1997 legislative session, the Academic Excellence Fees, various Facilities and Use Fees and the Operational Fees added by Act 788 of the 2004 legislative session, and any other fees added by the institution that are not authorized by the legislature to be paid by TOPS.

If you enroll in a regionally accredited independent college or university (non-public) in Louisiana that is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, TOPS pays the weighted average of the amount paid at public institutions and is calculated by dividing the total dollar value of awards (excluding award stipends) made under TOPS in the prior academic year to students attending public colleges and universities that offer baccalaureate degrees by the total number of students that received the awards.

Q-34. What is the value of a TOPS award?

- A. It depends on the college attended and the award made to you. The total value of a TOPS Honors Award for attendance at LSU in Baton Rouge for one year, based on the tuition for the 2011-2012 academic year, will be \$5,236 including the \$800 stipend. Current year tuition amounts are listed by institution at www.osfa.la.gov/TOPSAwardamounts.

Q-35. Will TOPS pay for summer school?

- A. The TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards will not pay for college summer school except when:
- the summer session is required in your degree program for graduation and you enrolled for at least the minimum number of hours required for the degree program, or
 - you can complete your program's graduation requirements in the summer session, or
 - the course(s) taken during the summer session is required for graduation in the program in which you are enrolled and is only offered during the summer session, or
 - the summer session is conducted for a nonacademic program in which you are enrolled, or
 - you have earned at least 60 hours.

NOTE: 1. An award made for summer school expends one semester or term of eligibility.

2. Hours earned during summer sessions do not count toward the required 24 hours.

Check with the financial aid officer at your school.

If you are pursuing a nonacademic (technical) certificate or diploma or degree, you should read the TOPS Tech Section.

Q-36. How many semesters does a TOPS award cover?

- A. You may receive TOPS Awards for up to eight (8) semesters or twelve (12) quarters unless:
- Your award is reduced by one or two semesters because your application was submitted after the deadline; or
 - You qualified for TOPS based on an ACT score achieved after the deadline but before July 1 immediately after graduation; or
 - You enrolled in an out-of-state college; or
 - Your award is reduced by one or two semesters because your Application to Return from an Out-of-State College was submitted after the deadline.

If you have a permanent disability or enter on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, you may be granted authority to attend part time, but your total TOPS award may not exceed the equivalent of eight (8) semesters or twelve (12) quarters. If TOPS has already paid for the semester or term during which you are called to active duty, the semester or term will not be charged as a semester of TOPS

used by you. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-37. Will TOPS pay for me to pursue a second undergraduate degree?

- A. No. If you successfully complete an academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level and have remaining TOPS eligibility, you CANNOT use the remaining eligibility to pursue a second academic undergraduate degree at the baccalaureate level. You MAY use the TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award for nonacademic, technical programs, and you may use your award to complete more than one such program, provided you have not exceeded your total eligibility of eight semesters.

Q-38. Will TOPS pay for graduate or professional school?

- A. Yes. If you completed an undergraduate degree without exhausting all 8 semesters or 12 quarters of eligibility, you may receive the period of eligibility remaining if you enroll in an eligible graduate or professional school no later than the fall semester following the one year anniversary of completion of your undergraduate degree and have met the requirements for continuation of your award.

If you have enrolled in an eligible Louisiana public professional school (veterinary, pharmacy, law, medical, etc.), the TOPS award amount is equal to the tuition charged by the school or an amount equal to the tuition charged by the highest cost public school for pursuit of a baccalaureate degree, whichever is less.

If you have enrolled in an eligible Louisiana private professional school, the TOPS award amount is calculated by dividing the total dollar value of awards (excluding award stipends) made under TOPS at public postsecondary institutions in the prior academic year to students attending public colleges and universities, by the total number of students that received the awards (weighted average).

If you enroll in a graduate degree program at an eligible Louisiana college or university, the TOPS award amount is equal to the tuition at the school or the tuition charged for a student while pursuing a baccalaureate degree at the highest cost public school in the state, whichever is less.

Q-39. How does my college get the money for my TOPS award?

- A. By statute, TOPS awards are paid directly to the college or university. Institutions submit payment requests to LOSFA for students who are enrolled full-time on the 15th class day (semester schools), or the 10th class day (quarter schools) or who enroll full-time after the 14th class day (semester schools), or the 9th class day (quarter schools). Funds are sent directly to the institutions either electronically or with a paper check.

Q-40. When is my TOPS award disbursed to my school?

- A. Your school will invoice LOSFA for your TOPS award after the 14th class day (semester schools) or the 9th class day (term or quarter schools). LOSFA will pay your award to your school after it receives and processes the invoice, normally within 10 days.

Q-41. How does the university get the TOPS money to me (both tuition and stipend)?

- A. This varies from institution to institution. You should contact the bursar or the financial aid officer at your school. Normally, your school applies the award to charges you owe the school and the balance, if any, will be remitted to you.

Q-42. Can I use TOPS in conjunction with other types of scholarships?

- A. Yes. You can be awarded scholarships, other financial aid and TOPS up to the cost of attendance for your college or university. Cost of attendance is determined by each college and university based on federal guidelines and can include tuition and fees, on-campus room and board (or a housing and food allowance for off-campus students) and allowances for books, supplies, transportation, child care, costs related to a disability, and miscellaneous expenses. Your college or university will deduct any amounts you owe for tuition, fees, and other charges, and it will remit the remainder to you.

If the total of your scholarships, state and federal aid and TOPS Award exceed the cost of attendance, your school will reduce any loans (if applicable) first and it will continue reducing your financial assistance until your awards do not exceed the cost of attendance. If the TOPS Award is eliminated, the semester or term will not be counted toward the maximum semesters or terms allowed.

Q-43. Can I use the TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award to enroll in an occupational, skill or technical (nonacademic) program?

- A. Yes. See the Section entitled TOPS Tech Award for additional information. Note that the Opportunity, Performance and Honors awards can now be used to pay for enrollment at eligible proprietary and cosmetology schools.

Q-44. Can I enroll for the first time as a full-time student at an out-of-state postsecondary institution and still qualify for TOPS?

- A. Yes. If you graduated from high school in 2002 or later and enrolled for the first time as a full-time student no later than the semester immediately following the first anniversary of your graduation from high school in an out-of-state postsecondary institution accredited by a regional accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education and thereafter returned to Louisiana and enrolled as a full-time student in an eligible college or university you may be eligible for TOPS. You must have met all the requirements for an award at the time of graduation from high school and while enrolled in an out-of-state college or university, met the requirements for continuation of the award. If you did not enroll full-time, maintain continuous enrollment, or earn 24 hours during the academic year due to circumstances beyond your immediate control, you may apply for an exception to the requirement. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

If you did enroll at an out-of-state college or university, you must apply for a TOPS award by doing all of the following:

1. Submit a FAFSA or, if you can demonstrate that you do not qualify for federal grant aid (Pell Grant) and do not want any other federal aid such as student loans, an On-Line Application no later than July 1 immediately following the academic year in which you enroll in an eligible Louisiana institution or no later than 60 days after the July 1st deadline (your award will be reduced by one semester), or 61 days but no later than 120 days after the July 1st deadline (your award will be reduced by two semesters); and
2. Submit –the TOPS Application to Return from an Out-of-State College (for use by students returning from out-of-state institutions) no later than July 1 immediately following the academic year in which you enroll in an eligible Louisiana institution for a full award. Beginning with the 2007-2008 academic year, LOSFA will accept your application if it is received no later than 60 days after the July 1st deadline but your award will be reduced by one semester; or 61 days but no later than 120 days after the July 1st deadline but your award will be reduced by two semesters. You should submit your Application with your official out-of-state transcript(s). The form is available on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform); and

3. Submit all supporting documentation, including an official **final** transcript for each out-of-state college or university attended. The transcripts must show each semester you attended an out-of-state college or university and include all hours attempted and/or earned. Submit all of your supporting documents with the TOPS Application to Return from an Out-of-State College. If it is not possible to submit all documentation at the time you submit the application before your July 1 deadline, submit the supporting documents so that they are received no later than **January 15th** immediately following the July 1 deadline.

If your Application is not received by the July 1 deadline or during the 120 days after the deadline and/or the supporting documents, including the official final transcripts, are not received by the applicable deadline, the Application will be denied and you will permanently lose your TOPS award. There are no extensions or exceptions to these deadlines.

Your TOPS period of eligibility will be reduced by one semester for each semester that you enrolled as a full-time student in the out-of-state college or university.

You must enroll in a Louisiana college or university no later than the next semester or term, excluding summer sessions and intersessions, immediately following the last semester that you were enrolled in the out-of-state college or university, unless granted an exception for cause. You can find the TOPS Request for Exception Form with instructions describing the various circumstances that qualify for an exception and the documentation required on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform) or you can contact a LOSFA Public Information Representative at (800) 259-5626, Ext. 1012 or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-45. Can my TOPS award be reinstated if I enroll for the first time as a full-time student at an eligible Louisiana college and then enroll at an out-of-state college?

- A. Yes. If you were determined eligible for a TOPS award and enrolled by the deadline in an eligible Louisiana college, and then you enrolled full-time at an out-of-state college accredited by a regional accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and then returned to Louisiana and enrolled in an eligible Louisiana college during the 2009-2010 academic year or later, you may be eligible for reinstatement of your TOPS award. You must have met all the requirements for continuation of your award while enrolled in an out-of-state college or university. If you did not enroll full-time, maintain continuous enrollment, or earn 24 hours during the academic year due to circumstances beyond your immediate control, you may apply for an exception to the requirement. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

See the answer to Question 57 for the definition of “academic year.”

See the answer to Question 44 for information on what you must do to have your award reinstated.

Q-46. If I enroll part time in an out-of-state college after I graduate from high school and then enroll in an eligible Louisiana college by the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of my high school graduation, do I have to submit an Application to Return from an Out-of-State College?

- A. No. You are not required to submit the Application to Return from an Out-of-State School because you were not enrolled full-time. However, we will need an official transcript from your out-of state college to determine your cumulative grade point average. (See next page)

Warning: If you fail to enroll as a full-time student in either the out-of-state college or in an eligible

Louisiana college by the semester immediately following the one year anniversary of your high school graduation, you will be ineligible for a TOPS award unless you were unable to enroll due to a circumstance that is not within your immediate control and you are granted an exception to the initial enrollment requirement. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

NOTICE OF ELIGIBILITY LETTERS

Q-47. Is there a schedule set up for mailing award letters?

- A. You cannot be determined eligible for a TOPS award until LOSFA has evaluated and confirmed your graduation date, ACT/SAT score, residency, citizenship, high school academic data transmitted by the Louisiana State Department of Education's Student Transcript System (STS) and the FAFSA or On-Line Application.

Eligibility is currently determined a number of times each week and may be determined each work day in the future. A letter notifying a student of his eligibility is sent out after the Thursday night processing. For most graduates, the letters will be mailed in late May or early June. LOSFA will continue to determine eligibility throughout the year, but the majority of students receive their letter by mid-July.

Letters for home study completers, non-graduates, and graduates of out-of-state and out-of-country high schools will be mailed after the information required for processing has been received and a determination of eligibility has been made. Timing of these letters will also be dependent on receipt of certifications from the Louisiana Department of Education, verifications from out-of-state and out-of-country high schools, and/or the education departments of other states.

Q-48. What do I have to do to receive my TOPS award?

- A. You must enroll as a full-time student in an eligible college or university no later than the first semester following the one year anniversary of graduation from high school, excluding summer sessions. For instance, if you graduate from high school in May 2012, you must enroll as a full-time student in an eligible college or university no later than the fall semester of 2013.

Enclosed with the letter notifying you of your TOPS eligibility is a document entitled "*Your Rights and Responsibilities.*" **KEEP THIS DOCUMENT DURING YOUR ENTIRE AWARD.** The statement explains that you have been determined eligible for a TOPS award and provides detailed instructions regarding the TOPS enrollment requirements which you must meet before the award is paid. You are personally responsible for complying with these requirements. A copy of this document is also available on LOSFA's Web site (www.osfa.la.gov).

Q-49 Do I have to notify LOSFA to accept my TOPS award?

- A. No. The school you are attending full-time as of the 15th class day of the semester (10th class day at Louisiana Tech) will bill LOSFA for your TOPS award.

Q-50 How can I check on my TOPS award status?

- A. You (the student) can register at the student logon on the Louisiana Awards System at www.osfa.la.gov at any time to check your ACT/SAT information and award status or you can call LOSFA at (800) 259-5626 Ext. 1012.

Note that you may register on the Award System at any time, but your ACT/SAT information will not be available until ACT or SAT reports a score.

Once you register, you may receive messages from LOSFA regarding what is needed to determine your eligibility for a TOPS award.

Your eligibility for a TOPS award cannot be determined until LOSFA has your ACT or SAT score, your STS data through high school graduation and your complete FAFSA or On-line Application. The information from these three sources is matched using your social security number, name and date of birth. Without the social security number, name and date of birth matching on all three, your TOPS eligibility cannot be determined. Failure to include your correctly spelled name, a correct date of birth and a correct social security number will greatly delay and could totally prevent processing for TOPS eligibility.

AWARD PAYMENT AND RENEWAL

Q-51. Do I need to apply for TOPS every year?

- A. You are strongly encouraged to reapply annually for TOPS by completing the FAFSA or renewal FAFSA. You must complete the FAFSA each year if you qualify for federal grant aid. In the event of a budget shortfall, a student who does not reapply by submitting a FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA will be the first to be eliminated from receiving his TOPS award. A student who is receiving other forms of federal and state financial aid must submit the FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA each year to continue receiving aid.

Q-52. What is the deadline to reapply for TOPS?

- A. TOPS renewal for the upcoming academic year should be filed no later than July 1 each year. The FAFSA for the upcoming academic year is available in January preceding the academic year for which you will be applying for TOPS and other student financial aid.

Q-53. What happens if I miss the July 1 renewal deadline?

- A. Your TOPS award will be eligible for renewal if you met the continuation requirements. However, if there is a budget shortfall, your award will not be funded.

Q-54. I just received my fee bill. Why is my TOPS Opportunity award not paying for all of my tuition?

- A. A TOPS Opportunity award provides an amount equal to tuition at a Louisiana public institution. This amount includes the basic tuition and fees that were in effect in January 1998. The amount does not include technology fees, academic excellence fees, energy surcharges, parking fees, room and board, or any other fee imposed by the school after January 1998 that has not been approved by the legislature. Some schools include these fees in the tuition amount on their fee bill.

If you are attending a private institution which is a member of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LACIU), you will receive an amount equal to the weighted average of public school tuition paid for the previous academic year.

Q-55. How many hours must I earn to renew my scholarship?

- A. You must earn (pass) 24 hours each academic year to retain your TOPS award. Failure to earn (pass) 24 hours will result in permanent cancellation of your award unless you are granted an exception for cause.

If you have been awarded the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards and are enrolled in a nonacademic program, you should read the answers to Questions 283 and 284.

Q-56. Do my Advanced Placement hours count toward the 24 hours required for the academic year for TOPS renewal?

- A. **No.** Advanced Placement hours were earned in high school so they do not count toward the 24 hours required for TOPS renewal.

Q-57. Do hours earned in summer school or intersession count toward the 24 hours required for the academic year for TOPS renewal?

- A. Hours earned during an intersession which occurs within the TOPS college academic year will count toward the 24 hour requirement for TOPS renewal. Beginning with the 2008-2009 academic year, the college academic year for TOPS begins with the fall semester and ends with the intersession immediately following the spring semester or quarter and includes intersessions, semesters and quarters that end before the end of the spring intersession. Hours earned in summer sessions and intersessions outside of the TOPS college academic year do not count toward the hours required for the academic year unless the student is enrolled in a technical program.

A “spring intersession” is an academic term that provides credit courses to students in an intensive, condensed format that is no longer than 15 class days and ends no later than June 15.

If you have been awarded the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards and you are enrolled in a nonacademic program, you should read the answers to Questions 273, 279, and 285.

Q-58. My college does not give credit for remedial hours. Do remedial hours count toward the 24 hours required for the academic year for TOPS renewal?

- A. Yes. Remedial hours taken and passed during the academic year do count toward the 24 hours required. If your school reports a “P” for a remedial class, the hours earned will count toward the 24 hours.

Q-59. What GPA do I need to renew my TOPS Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award?

- A. To renew your award:
- You must maintain Steady Academic Progress (cumulative 2.00 GPA on a 4.00 scale) at the end of every semester, quarter, term, session or intersession for which grades are reported. If you do not maintain a 2.00, your award will be suspended for failure to maintain Steady Academic Progress.
 - In addition, your Cumulative Grade Point Average (Cum GPA) will be calculated on all coursework you have attempted, including grades earned for dual enrollment course taken while in high school, summer session grades, remedial course grades and repeated course grades, at the end of each academic year (spring semester or quarter). Your Cum GPA is calculated by LOSFA based on academic reports received from all schools that you have attended, and it could differ from the Cum GPA calculated by the school you currently attend.
 - For the TOPS OPPORTUNITY AWARD:
If you have earned at least 24 hours during the academic year at the end of the spring semester, quarter or term, you must have at least the following Cum GPA at the end of the spring semester, quarter or term:

2.30 with 24 to 47 earned hours

2.50 with 48 or more earned hours

If you have NOT earned at least 24 hours during the academic year at the end of the spring semester, quarter or term, you must have earned at least 24 hours and at least the following Cum GPA by the end of the spring intersession:

-2.30 with 24 to 47 earned hours
-2.50 with 48 or more earned hours

- For the TOPS PERFORMANCE/HONORS AWARD
 1. If you have earned at least 24 hours during the academic year by the end of the spring semester, quarter or term, you must have at least 3.00 Cum GPA of by the end of the spring semester, quarter or term:
 2. If you have NOT earned at least 24 hours during the academic year at the end of the spring semester, quarter or term, you must have earned at least 24 hours and at least a 3.00 Cum GPA by the end of the spring intersession:
 3. If you have been awarded the TOPS Performance or Honors award and you have less than a 3.00 Cum GPA when required, your award will be changed to Opportunity Award for the remaining period of eligibility and you will not receive the stipend that goes with the award. Once a stipend is lost, it cannot be regained.
- You must achieve the Cum GPA required for the Opportunity Award at the end of the spring semester, or your TOPS Award will be suspended until you have regained academic standing and have achieved the required Cum GPA.
- If you do not achieve the required Cum GPA within two years from the end of the semester your award is suspended, your award will be permanently canceled. There are no exceptions or waivers to this cancelation.
- Note that if you request an exception and it is granted, the period of suspension for grades is not interrupted.
- If you are enrolled in a technical program, you must have a 2.50 Cum GPA at the end of the spring semester or your award will be suspended, regardless of the number of hours you have earned. If you do not achieve the required Cum GPA within one year from the end of the semester your award is suspended, your award will be permanently canceled.
- Note that if you have earned hours in both an academic program and a technical program, your grades from each program remain separate for purposes of calculating your Cum GPA. For example, if you have a 3.20 on 12 hours in a technical program and a 2.80 on 12 hours an academic program, your Cum GPA will not be 3.00. It will be 3.20 in the technical program and 2.80 in the academic program.

See the answer to Question 57 for the definition of “academic year.”

Q-60. I had a 1.95 GPA at the end of the fall semester. Why was my award suspended for the spring semester if the GPA is only checked at the end of the spring semester?

A. You must maintain Steady Academic Progress, which means that you must have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.00, at the end of each semester/quarter/term/intersession/session. If you do not maintain Steady Academic Progress, your award will be suspended.

Q-61. What does it mean when my award is suspended?

A. If your award is suspended, your TOPS award will not be paid; however, you must meet the continuation requirements to qualify for reinstatement, i.e.: you must enroll full-time, remain continuously enrolled and earn at least 24 hours each academic year, unless you are granted an exception to these requirements.

Your award will be reinstated if you achieve the required Cumulative Grade Point Average within the time allowed. (See the answer to Question 59.) Upon reinstatement, you will be eligible for payment of the remaining semesters of your TOPS eligibility.

Q-62. I had 24 hours with a 2.29 cumulative GPA at the end of the spring semester/quarter. Why is my Opportunity award suspended?

- A. You must have a cumulative GPA of **at least** 2.30 to renew your Opportunity award if you have 24 or more earned credit hours and less than 48 credit hours at the end of the spring semester/quarter/term. Since Your cumulative GPA of 2.29 is less than the required GPA. **There is no rounding up of a cumulative GPA for TOPS.**

If you had not earned 24 or more earned credit hours at the end of the spring semester/quarter/term, you must have a cumulative GPA of **at least** 2.30 to renew your Opportunity award after the spring intersession, if you had earned at least 24 hours. Note that your award would be canceled if you did not have at least 24 earned hours after the spring intersession.

See the answer to Question 57 for the definition of “academic year.”

Q-63. What is the cumulative GPA required for continuation of my Performance or Honors Award?

- A. You must earn at least 24 hours each academic year and must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 at the end of each spring semester if you had at least 24 hours at that time or a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 at the following each spring intersession if you did not.

See the answer to Question 57 for the definition of “academic year.”

Q-64. What happens if I do not have at least a 3.00 cumulative GPA for continuation of my Performance or Honors Award?

- A. If you do not maintain the minimum 3.00 cumulative GPA required for renewal of a Performance or Honors Award but you do have a cumulative GPA of 2.50 that is required to renew an Opportunity Award, your award will be reduced to an Opportunity Award. Once your award has been reduced to the Opportunity award, your Performance or Honors award will **not** be reinstated and you are no longer eligible to receive stipends. If your cumulative GPA is below the minimum required to renew an Opportunity Award, your award will be suspended. If your award is reinstated, you will receive the Opportunity award for your remaining semesters of eligibility. See Questions 59-61 regarding suspension of awards.

Q-65. My award was suspended for GPA, but my friend’s award was cancelled for failing to earn 24 hours. What is the difference between suspension and cancelation?

- A. If your TOPS award is suspended for failure to earn the required cumulative GPA or for failure to maintain Steady Academic Progress, you will have an opportunity to have your award reinstated once you have re-attained the minimum required cumulative GPA if the period of ineligibility does not exceed two years from the end of the semester the award is suspended (one year from the end of the semester the award is suspended for the TOPS Tech Award or for a student using an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award to pursue a technical program).

If your award is canceled due to failure to earn at least 24 hours during the academic year, you are not eligible for reinstatement of your award unless you are granted an exception. If your award is canceled and you can provide documentation that circumstances beyond your control prevented you from earning at least 24 hours, you can apply for an exception. Your Request for Exception form must be received no later than six months from the date of the letter notifying you of the cancelation of your TOPS award. Even if the exception is approved, your award still may be suspended for failure to earn the required GPA or for failure to maintain Steady Academic Progress. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained

directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-66. How will I know if my TOPS award has been renewed?

- A. You can check your renewal status by creating an account on the Louisiana Award System at www.osfa.la.gov. LOSFA does not send TOPS award renewal letters.

Q-67. I have the TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award. Will TOPS pay for me to attend summer school?

- A. TOPS will **ONLY** pay for summer school if you are enrolled in a **Qualified Summer Session**. A Qualified Summer Session is one which your institution certifies that:
- The summer session is required by your degree program for graduation, or
 - You will graduate in the summer session, or
 - The courses taken during the summer session are required by your degree program and are only offered during the summer session, or
 - You are enrolled in a technical program, or
 - You have earned at least 60 hours.

For TOPS to pay for a summer session, you must have been enrolled as a full-time student in a semester or quarter during the preceding academic year.

TOPS payment for a Qualified Summer Session will expend one full semester of TOPS eligibility. Performance and Honors award recipients will receive their stipends during a Qualified Summer Session.

Credit hours earned during a Qualified Summer Session will not count toward the 24 hours required for TOPS retention unless you are enrolled in a technical program.

See the Section entitled TOPS Tech Award for additional information.

Q-68. I enrolled for the first time as a full-time student at an out-of-state school. Can I come back to Louisiana and receive a TOPS award?

- A. Yes.

SEE THE ANSWER TO QUESTION 44 FOR INFORMATION REGARDING REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES.

Q-69. If I enroll in an eligible out-of-state college AFTER my first year of receiving TOPS at an eligible Louisiana institution, can I return to Louisiana and still receive my TOPS award in the future?

- A. Yes, provided you return to Louisiana in the 2009-2010 academic year or later.

SEE THE ANSWER TO QUESTION 44 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES.

Q-70. I just completed my 4 year enlistment in the Army. Can I receive a TOPS award?

- A. Yes, if you:

1. Joined the Armed Forces and were on active duty within one year of high school graduation. You must enroll in an eligible institution by the first fall semester/quarter/term following the fifth anniversary of high school graduation or the one year anniversary of your separation from active duty, whichever comes earlier. To be eligible, you must have received an honorable discharge or a general discharge under honorable conditions and must submit the FAFSA or the TOPS online application so that it is received no later than one year after separation from active duty. If your initial enlistment is extended (voluntarily or involuntarily) so that your initial enrollment in college is later than five years after high school graduation, you may apply for an exception to the initial enrollment requirement. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the required documentation can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform) or obtained directly from LOSFA. If you re-enlist, this exception is not available and you will not be eligible to receive a TOPS award.

OR

2. Are a 2003 or later graduate who first enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible Louisiana institution and then voluntarily enlists and enters on active duty as a member of the regular U.S. Armed Forces during a National Emergency declared by the President of the United States or when the United States is engaged in armed conflict. You must request an exception no later than six months from the date of the letter notifying you of the cancelation of your TOPS award. You may also request an exception prior to entering on active duty, and provide to LOSFA the documentation required to receive an exception.

Q-71. I was just notified that I am being called to active duty during the current semester. What happens to my TOPS award?

- A. You must request an exception as soon as possible, but no later than six months from the date of the letter notifying you of the cancelation of your TOPS award. If TOPS has already paid for the semester or term during which you are called to active duty, the semester or term will not be charged as a semester of TOPS used by you. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the required documentation can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform) or obtained directly from LOSFA.

If your TOPS award is suspended for failure to earn the required grade point average at the time you are called to active duty, the period of suspension will be extended by the length of time you are on active duty.

Q-72. I have been offered a CO-OP/Internship for the upcoming academic year. What happens to my TOPS award if I accept it?

- A. A CO-OP/Internship may be considered an exceptional educational opportunity, if your academic dean certifies in writing that the CO-OP/Internship is considered an exceptional educational opportunity. An exception for an exceptional educational opportunity may be granted for up to two consecutive semesters or the required program length.

Q-73. I am a nursing student. I will be in clinicals next semester. Do I still have to take 12 hours for the semester to be full-time?

- A. If your college considers you to be enrolled full-time (although less than 12 hours), you may enroll in the number of hours required by your program of study. You are considered program full-time and will not be required to earn 24 hours for the academic year. To be considered program full-time, your school must certify that you are considered to be enrolled full-time in your program of study when it bills LOSFA for the TOPS award.

Q-74. How many semesters will my TOPS award pay?

- A. The Opportunity, Performance and Honors awards are paid up to 8 semesters or 12 quarters unless:

- Your TOPS award is reduced by one or two semesters because your application was submitted after the deadline; or
- You qualified for TOPS based on an ACT score achieved after the deadline but before July 1 immediately after graduation; or
- Your award is reduced for semester(s) enrolled in an eligible out-of-state college; or
- Your award is reduced by one or two semesters because your Application to Return from an Out-of-State College was submitted after the deadline.

TOPS Tech awards are paid up to two years. See the TOPS Tech Award Section starting with Question 266 for addition information.

Once a semester of the TOPS award is paid, it counts toward your total award, even if you are not able to complete the semester. (Students who are called to active duty during a semester do NOT lose a semester of eligibility, even if your award has been paid for the semester.) However, if you receive an exception for the semester **AND** your college reimburses LOSFA for some or all the amount paid by TOPS for that semester, the amount reimbursed will be available to you for a subsequent semester provided you have enrolled full-time and met the cumulative GPA requirement.

Q-75. Are there any exceptions to the maximum number of semesters allowed for TOPS?

- B. Yes. If you are granted an exception based on a permanent disability or if you are on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces, you may enroll on a part time basis. The total TOPS payments may not exceed the equivalent of eight semesters of payments of the full TOPS award. See the Permanent Disability Section below.

In addition, if you cannot complete a semester **AND** you receive an exception for that semester **AND** the college reimburses LOSFA for some or all the amount paid by TOPS for that semester, the amount reimbursed will be available to you for a subsequent semester, provided you have enrolled full-time and met the cumulative GPA requirement.

Q-76. I completed my bachelor's degree in less than 8 semesters. Do I lose the remaining semesters of my TOPS award?

- A. No, you do not lose the remaining semesters. You may receive your award for any remaining semesters or quarters of eligibility for graduate or professional study. To be eligible for payments for graduate or professional school, you must enroll no later than the fall semester immediately following the first anniversary of your completion of an undergraduate degree and you must have met the requirements for continued eligibility.

Q-77. How much will my TOPS award pay for graduate school?

- A. TOPS will pay the amount of tuition charged for the graduate study OR the amount charged for undergraduate full-time enrollment at the highest cost public institution (currently LSU-BR), whichever is less. Performance and Honors award recipients will receive their stipends while in graduate school.

CITIZENSHIP REQUIREMENT

Q-78. I am not a U.S. citizen. Am I eligible for TOPS?

- A. You must either be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident as defined by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services to receive TOPS.

Q-79. What documentation can I provide to LOSFA to verify my permanent residency status or citizenship?

- A. If you are a permanent resident, you may provide a copy of one of the following:
1. Permanent Resident Card - Form I-551, or
 2. Application for Naturalization and/or Certificate of Naturalization, or
 4. A foreign passport page indicating initial admission as a permanent resident, or
 5. A re-entry permit indicating permanent residency.

If you are a citizen, you must provide a copy of one of the following:

1. A U. S. birth certificate;
2. A Certificate of Citizenship, or
3. A U.S. passport.

If you believe that you are a permanent resident or a citizen and you do not have one of the listed documents, you should contact LOSFA at (800) 259-5626 Ext. 1012 or by e-mail at custserv@osfa.la.gov.

Q-80. Are there any exceptions or circumstances that would allow a waiver of the citizenship or permanent resident status requirement?

- A. No; however, the Commission recognizes that the process for applying for permanent resident status is often delayed and can be very time consuming. For these reasons, it has authorized LOSFA to consider the circumstances of a student who applied for permanent residency before graduating from high school.

If you applied for permanent resident status before high school graduation, you should contact LOSFA. Your TOPS award will not be paid until you have been granted permanent residency status and LOSFA determines that you have met the initial and continuing eligibility requirements.

Q-81. Will a student who has an H-4 visa be eligible for a TOPS award?

- A. No. This is a visa for a spouse or child of a nonimmigrant temporary worker who has a H-1, H-2 or H-3 visa. This student is not a permanent resident.

Q-82. Will a student with an F-1 visa be eligible for a TOPS award?

- A. No. This is a visa for a student who seeks to study in the United States. To qualify for this visa, a student must maintain a permanent residence abroad, which the student has no intention of giving up.

CORE CURRICULUM

The TOPS Core Curriculum Reference Tables used in the Student Transcript System are available on the Department of Education's LEADS Portal, <https://leads.doe.louisiana.gov/ptl/> on the STSQ12 report and on LOSFA's Web site, osfa.la.gov. Also available on these sites are the Course Code Tables.

Q-83. If I entered the 9th grade during the 2008-2009 school year or later, do I need to take the TOPS Core Curriculum or the CORE 4 Curriculum?

- A. Anyone entering the 9th grade during the 2008-2009 school year or afterwards is required to take the CORE 4 curriculum to graduate from high school. Graduation is also required to be eligible for TOPS. So, you should take the TOPS Core Curriculum as part of the required CORE 4 courses. **Periodically discuss course requirements with your high school guidance counselor to ensure that you're on track to graduate AND to be eligible to receive TOPS.**

Q-84. If my high school does not offer a TOPS core course, can it be waived?

A. No, a TOPS core course cannot be waived if you graduated from high school after 2003. Starting with the 2003-04 high school academic year, you are required to complete the TOPS core curriculum requirements. If your school does not offer a course, other arrangements such as correspondence, distance learning, or concurrent enrollment for college credit, must be made to acquire the course before graduation if you want to qualify for a TOPS award. These classes must be listed on your official high school transcript at the time of graduation to be considered for the TOPS core curriculum.

Q-85. I graduated from an out-of-state/out-of-country high school. Do I have to meet the TOPS core curriculum requirements to be eligible for a TOPS Award?

A. No, you are NOT required to meet the TOPS core curriculum requirements to qualify for a TOPS Award. However, you must have an ACT (SAT) score of at least 20 for TOPS Tech and at least a 23 for Opportunity, 26 for Performance and 30 for Honors. **NOTE:** If you graduated/will graduate from an out-of-country high school, you are not eligible for the TOPS Performance or Honors Award if the Louisiana residency requirement is met based on a parent who is a Louisiana resident living outside the United States who actively engaged in work or another activity on behalf of a Louisiana sponsor or employer after having lived in Louisiana at least 24 months prior to starting work out of the country.

Q-86. I did not take French I, but took French II and French III. Can these two classes be used to meet the Foreign Language requirement?

A. Yes. The TOPS statute only requires two (2) units in the same language.

Q-87. I am taking American Sign Language. Can these courses be counted as TOPS core curriculum foreign language courses?

A. Yes, beginning with 2005 graduates. The LDE added American Sign Language to the Secondary Programs of Study in the Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators (Louisiana Department of Education Bulletin 741) and has added course listings for American Sign Language I (123456) and American Sign Language II (123457). The only approved course is American Sign Language.

Note that LDE does not consider courses currently designated as “Signing” or “Sign Language” to include all the necessary components of American Sign Language, so these courses are not acceptable as substitutes.

Q-88. Can I be eligible for TOPS if I graduated early and could only take Business English instead of English IV?

A. No. You would not be eligible for TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors because the TOPS statute requires English IV. However, you may be eligible for the TOPS Tech Award.

Q-89. Some of the TOPS core curriculum courses permit me to substitute for the other subjects listed in the core curriculum. What courses does this include for 2012 graduates?

A. See TOPS Core Curriculum Tables for a complete list of courses that may be substituted for Fine Arts Survey or the ½ unit of Computer Science, Computer Literacy, or Business Computer Applications. The TOPS Core Curriculum Reference Tables used in the Student Transcript System are available on the Department of Education’s LEADS Portal, <https://leads.doe.louisiana.gov/ptl/> on the STSQ12 report and on LOSFA’s Web site, www.osfa.la.gov.

Q-90. If I passed a proficiency test for a foreign language, can the unit be used for completion of the TOPS core curriculum foreign language requirement?

A. Yes. If your high school credits the foreign language unit obtained through proficiency testing in the Student Transcript System, it may be used for the TOPS core curriculum.

Q-91. Can an extra foreign language be used to substitute for either the required unit of Fine Arts Survey or ½ unit of Computer Science?

A. Yes. An extra foreign language (third in the same language or in a second foreign language) may substitute for either the required unit of Fine Arts Survey or the ½ unit of Computer Science.

Q-92. Can Speech Debate be used as a substitute for the required unit of Fine Arts Survey?

A. No. Students graduating in 2009 and later may substitute Speech III and Speech IV (both units) for Fine Arts Survey, but Speech Debate may no longer be used.

Q-93. If I complete one unit of Civics and ½ unit of free enterprise in high school, can I use the extra ½ unit of Civics as a substitute for the ½ unit of computer literacy?

A. In effect, yes. Actually, the civics unit will be substituted for the 1 unit of Civics/Free Enterprise and the Free Enterprise will be substituted for the ½ unit of computer literacy. The resulting cumulative grade point average will be the same as if the ½ unit of Civics was substituted for computer literacy.

Q-94. I earned ½ unit of Fine Arts Survey and ½ unit of Environmental Science that is not needed to meet my other TOPS core curriculum requirements. Can I use the ½ credit of Environmental Science to complete my Fine Arts Survey requirement?

A. No. You must earn a whole unit of Environmental Science to substitute for the Fine Arts Survey requirement.

Q-95. I have taken college courses for credit. May these be considered as part of the TOPS core curriculum for TOPS purposes?

A. Yes. College level courses taken independently, during the summer or in a dual enrollment program such as Early Start, whether in the classroom, on-line, or by correspondence, may be used to qualify for TOPS if your high school determines the courses are TOPS core equivalent courses and the courses are credited on your official high school transcript, using the correct Department of Education course code and transmitted to LOSFA by the Student Transcript System.

College level courses taken in an early admissions program must be reported on the forms required by the Louisiana Department of Education. See the section on “Early College Admission Programs” for additional information.

Q-96. I grew up in China and speak fluent Chinese, but I am just now learning English. Can the English courses count as the foreign language, and if not, can the fact that I speak Chinese count?

A. No. English is not considered a foreign language. The English courses are part of the core curriculum. You must take and pass the foreign language courses during high school. By itself, the fact that you speak Chinese does not count toward the TOPS core curriculum foreign language requirement; however, if you pass a proficiency test in Chinese and it is credited on your official transcript and is entered in STS, it may be used to satisfy the foreign language requirement.

Q-97. Who should be contacted to get approval for courses taught at a high school that may be equivalent to courses in the TOPS core curriculum?

- A. Your school's local governing school board (or equivalent authority for private schools) must submit a request to LOSFA. The course must be listed in the Secondary Programs of Study in the Louisiana Handbook for School Administrators (LDE Bulletin 741). The request should include the course syllabus and sufficient information to support the request. BESE and the Board of Regents will determine if the course is equivalent. If BESE and the Board of Regents concur that the course is equivalent to a course in the core curriculum, a proposed rule will be submitted to the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission for initiation of rulemaking to authorize the course as an equivalent.

Q-98. Can Integrated Mathematics I, II and III substitute for TOPS core curriculum courses?

- A. All three courses, Integrated Mathematics I, II and III substitute for Algebra I, Algebra II and Geometry. Separately, the courses substitute as Integrated Mathematics I for Algebra I, Integrated Mathematics II for Algebra II and Integrated Mathematics III for Geometry.

Q-99. What are the BESE approved statewide computer related courses for TOPS?

- A. The BESE approved statewide computer related courses for students graduating in 2008 through 2013, are as follows:

- Advanced Technical Drafting (½ or 1 credit)
- Business Computer Applications (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Applications or Computer/Technology Applications (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Architecture (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Electronics I (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Electronics II (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer/Technology Literacy (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Science I (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Science II (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Systems and Networking I (½ or 1 credit)
- Computer Systems and Networking II (½ or 1 credit)
- Database Design and Programming (½ or 1 credit)
- Database Programming with PL/SQL (½ credit)
- Desktop Publishing (½ or 1 credit)
- Digital Graphics & Animation (½ credit)
- Digital Media I (1/2 or 1 credit)
- Digital Media II (1/2 or 1 credit)
- Introduction to Business Computer Applications (½ or 1 credit)
- Java Programming (1/2 or 1 credit)
- Multimedia Productions or Multimedia Presentations (½ or 1 credit)
- Technology Education Computer Applications (½ or 1 credit)
- Telecommunications (½ credit)
- Web Mastering or Web Design (½ credit)
- Word Processing (½ or 1 credit)
- Independent Study in Technology Applications (½ or 1 credit)

Note: A computer related course will not be required for and may not be used by students graduating in 2014 and later.

Q-100. I earned ½ unit in four different performance courses in music, dance or theater. Can these courses

be used to complete the 2 full units of performance courses required as a substitute for Fine Arts Survey?

- A. Yes. Beginning with the graduating class of 2003, you may use four ½ unit performance or four ½ unit visual arts, or four ½ unit studio arts courses to substitute for Fine Arts Survey. Since the Student Transcript System cannot recognize this combination of courses as a substitute for Fine Arts Survey requirement, you or your high school guidance counselor must contact LOSFA by email at custserv@osfa.la.gov or by mail to request a determination through an audit.

Note: The ½ units must be in the same program type (performance, studio or visual arts). For example, two ½ unit performance art courses may not be combined with two ½ unit studio arts courses to satisfy the Fine Arts Survey core curriculum requirement.

Q-101. How many core units do I have to earn to complete the core curriculum for the TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors awards?

- A. If you graduate in 2012 or 2013, you must earn 17.5 core units.
If you graduate in 2014 or later, you must earn 19 core units.

Q-102. Can I substitute a TOPS core curriculum elective for the Computer Science requirement?

- A. Yes, if you graduate in 2012 or 2013, you will be allowed to substitute a TOPS core curriculum elective for the computer requirement.

A computer related course will not be required for students graduating in 2014 and later.

Q-103. Can I substitute Agriscience I & II for the 3rd science course requirement and the additional math/science requirement?

- A. If you graduate from high school in 2012 or 2013:
- Agriscience I & II (both for one unit) may be used to satisfy the core requirement for a **third science**. In other words, Agriscience I & II (both for one unit) may be used instead of one unit of Earth Science, Environmental Science, Physical Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II, or Physics for Technology.
 - You must earn either a fourth unit of advanced math or a fourth unit of science to complete the TOPS Core Curriculum for the Opportunity, Performance and Honors awards. Agriscience I & II (both for one unit) may not be used to satisfy this requirement.

If you graduate from high school in 2014 or later, you must earn 4 math units and 4 science units. Agriscience I & II (both for one unit) may be used to satisfy one unit of the science requirement.

Q-104. If I substitute a core course for the computer science category, can I use ½ unit of the core course or must it be a full unit?

- A. Yes. A ½ unit of an unused core course may be substituted for the ½ unit of computer science.

Q-105. Is Keyboarding approved as a computer science course for TOPS?

- A. Keyboarding must be approved by BESE for use as a TOPS computer substitute on a district wide basis. Submission for approval to BESE must be made by the district office for public high schools and by the governing board for non-public high schools.

For schools that have requested and received approval of Keyboarding for previous academic years, the course must have been resubmitted and approved for use in the 2003-2004 academic year and beyond or the course is no longer a valid substitution. Check with your high school guidance counselor to see if you can use this course to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement for computer science.

Q-106. Can I use Anatomy and Physiology as one of advanced sciences?

- A. Yes. Beginning with students graduating in 2011, one unit of Anatomy and Physiology may be substituted for one unit of the following advanced sciences: Earth Science, Environmental Science, Physical Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II, or Physics for Technology or Agriscience I and II (both for 1 unit).

CUMULATIVE HIGH SCHOOL GRADE POINT AVERAGE FOR TOPS

General

Q-107. Who is responsible for calculating the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average?

- A. The final TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average is calculated by the Louisiana Department of Education using data from your official transcript transmitted through the Student Transcript System (STS) by each Local Education Authority (LEA) (for public high schools) or by the high school (for non-public high schools).

Q-108. How is the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average calculated?

- A. Your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average is calculated on a 4.00 scale using the grades for the courses that were used to satisfy one of TOPS Core Curricula. For those high schools that utilize other than a 4.00 scale, all grade values will be converted to a 4.00 scale utilizing the following formula:

For schools awarding a maximum of 5 points for honors courses, the formula would be used to convert the honors course grade of “C” (which assumes that a “C” would be equal to 3.00 points in the 5.00 grading system) as shown in the following example.

$$\frac{3.00}{5.00} = \frac{X}{4.00}$$

By cross multiplying, $5X = 12; X = 2.40$

Q-109. What happens if I have taken more than the required number of units of core courses?

- A. If you have earned more than the required number of units of courses that are included in the TOPS core curriculum, your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average will be calculated using the courses with the highest grades that satisfy the required core curriculum.

For example, if you have taken more than one Advanced Mathematics course, either of which would satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement, the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average will be calculated using only the math course in which you received the highest grade.

Q-110. What happens if I have taken the same course more than once?

- A. In the event you take the same core course more than one time, your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average will be calculated using the highest grade earned in the course. Example: if you earned an “F” in Algebra I and a “B” by repeating the course, the “B” would be used in calculating your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average.

Q-111. I earned credit for TOPS core courses on a Pass/Fail basis. How are these courses treated in the grade point average calculation?

- A. For TOPS purposes, the Pass/Fail is not assigned a quality point value and is not included in the calculation of the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average. A TOPS core course that is completed as a “pass” is not included in the grade point calculation in any way. Failed courses cannot be used to complete the core curriculum.

A Pass/Fail core course that is passed is used in counting the number of units needed to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement. A Pass/Fail core course that is failed is not counted in the number of units needed to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement.

Q-112. I earned credit for TOPS core courses by taking proficiency tests. How will these courses be included in the grade point average calculation?

- A. A TOPS core course that is earned through proficiency testing will not be included in the GPA calculation. The course may be used in counting the number of units needed to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirement.

Q-113. Why doesn't my TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average agree with the GPA shown on my official transcript?

- A. If you graduate in 2003 or later, your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average must be calculated using only the grades earned for courses that are used to satisfy the TOPS Core Curriculum units. The official transcript overall cumulative GPA is based on all courses attempted. In addition, your high school may include failed courses that you have repeated for a passing grade on the official transcript. These differences will generally result in a grade point average that is different than the grade point average computed for TOPS. In addition, some high schools use a grade point scale higher than a 4.0 for honors and advanced placement courses. This difference can result in grade point averages higher than a 4.0. For purposes of determining TOPS eligibility, all grades are converted to a 4.0 grade point scale.

Q-114. My TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average is 2.499. Can this be rounded up to a 2.50?

- A. No. The TOPS statute requires that you earn at least a 2.50 grade point average. A 2.499 average is less than 2.50 and may not be rounded up.

Q-115. I failed a TOPS core course, took the class over, then made an A, and our parish policy states that the F is not transferred to the transcript. How will LOSFA calculate my TOPS Cumulative High School GPA?

- A. The TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average will be computed using the grades on courses that are used to satisfy the TOPS Core Curriculum units. Courses that are failed cannot be used. The highest grade achieved for a course, regardless of the number of times the course is taken, will be used for the calculation. In this case, the student's “A” would be used. Previous questions and answers in this series provide complete information about calculating the grade point average.

Q-116. If I make a higher ACT score than 20, do I still need a 2.50 TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average?

- A. Yes. The TOPS statute requires a minimum TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average of 2.50. This minimum cannot be waived.

Q-117. Is there any circumstance that I could qualify for a TOPS Award without meeting the requirement to earn at least a TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average of 2.50 on the courses used to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum?

- A. Yes. If you graduate from an out-of-state high school, an out-of-country high school, or complete a BESE approved home study program or if you meet certain intelligence testing requirements (See the answer to Question 176), you do not have to meet the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average requirement nor the core curriculum requirement. However, if you graduate from an out-of-state or out-of-country high school, you must earn an ACT score that is at least 3 points higher than that required for students who graduate from Louisiana high schools. If you complete an approved home study program, you must earn an ACT score that is 2 points higher than students who graduate from Louisiana high schools for the Opportunity Award and 1 point higher for the Performance and Honors Awards.

In addition, if you do not graduate from high school and are determined eligible for a TOPS award by meeting certain intelligence testing criteria, you are not required to complete the TOPS core curriculum or achieve a minimum TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average. See the answer to Question 176.

If you graduate from a BESE approved high school, you must have at least a 2.50 on the TOPS Core Curriculum units.

Q-118. If I make a 3.00 cumulative GPA in college, can I move up to a higher award level?

- A. No. You are awarded TOPS based on your academic performance in high school. You must meet the TOPS requirements at the time of graduation from high school and once awarded, must meet certain academic standards in college to continue your award.

Q-119. If I did not have a TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average of 2.50 when I graduated high school, can I get a higher GPA in college and receive TOPS then?

- A. No. You are awarded TOPS based on your academic performance in high school. You must meet the TOPS requirements at the time of graduation from high school.

Q-120. Is there an exception for the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average if I have a disability or exceptionality and am on a 504 plan or have an IEP on file?

- A. No. The statute requires a minimum TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average of 2.50. This requirement cannot be waived.

Q-121. My high school computes its grades on a semester basis. How will the Louisiana Department of Education calculate my TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average (GPA)?

- A. The TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average for your school will be computed using the two semester grades for each course. Your school may report either a single annual grade for a course or two semester grades, depending on the school's procedure.

Q-122. My high school computes its grades on an annual basis. How will the Louisiana Department of

Education calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average?

- A. The TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average for your school will be computed using the annual grade. Your high school may report either a single annual grade for a course or two semester grades, depending on the school's procedure.

Q-123. If through the use of substitutions, such as two units of music for Fine Arts Survey or Algebra I Parts 1 and 2, I have more than 17.5 units to meet the TOPS core curriculum requirement, will the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average calculation be based on 17.5 units or the actual number of units used to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum?

- A. The number of units used in the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average cannot exceed 17.5 units or 19 units if you graduate in 2014 or later.

In those cases where one unit is used to substitute for a $\frac{1}{2}$ unit, the grade on the substitute unit will be used in the calculation. If more than one unit is used to substitute for a one unit requirement, the grades must be added together and divided by the number of grades. For example, if Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2, are used to substitute for Fine Arts Survey and the units are graded on an annual basis, the grades for each year for each unit will be added together and divided by two. If the units were graded on a semester basis, the grades for each semester for each unit will be added together and divided by four. The resulting grade (Relative Grade Points) based on one unit of credit will be used to determine the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average.

For example, for schools that grade on an annual basis, a student receives an "A" for the year in Algebra I, Part 1, and receives a "C" for the year in Algebra I, Part 2. The grades for each year will be added ($4+2=6$) and the sum is divided by two (2) resulting in a grade of 3.00, or "B."

For schools that grade on a semester basis, a student receives an "A" for the first semester and a "B" for the second semester of Algebra I, Part 1, and receives a "C" for the first semester and an "A" for the second semester of Algebra I, Part 2. The grades for each semester will be added ($4+3+2+4=13$) and the sum is divided by four (4) resulting in a grade of 3.25.

Q-124. If I have one unit of Civics and $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of Free Enterprise, how is the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average calculated?

- A. If your school grades on an annual basis, one $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of the Civics annual grade will be used with the grade for the one semester of Free Enterprise.

If your school grades on a semester basis, the two semester grades in Civics will be averaged and $\frac{1}{2}$ of the average will be used with the semester grade for Free Enterprise.

For example, at a school that grades on a semester basis, you receive an "A" for the first semester and a "B" for the second semester of Civics. The "A" and "B" will be averaged $(4+3)/2=3.50$ and the GPA will be computed using 3.50 for the Civics grade.

Q-125. I did not earn the required $\frac{1}{2}$ unit in the computer category, but I have an extra $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of Civics. Can I use the extra $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of Civics to meet the requirement?

- A. In effect, yes. Actually, the civics unit will be substituted for the 1 unit of Civics/Free Enterprise and the Free Enterprise will be substituted for the $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of computer literacy. The resulting cumulative grade point average will be the same as if the $\frac{1}{2}$ unit of Civics was substituted for computer literacy.

Q-126. I took French I and failed it. I decided not to pursue French as my foreign language choice. Instead, I

completed Spanish I and II to meet my foreign language requirement for TOPS. Will the French grade have any bearing on my GPA for calculating TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average based on TOPS core curriculum courses?

- A. No. A course that is failed cannot be used to complete the TOPS core curriculum requirement and only the courses used to satisfy the TOPS Core Curriculum units will be used in the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average calculation.

Q-127. If I complete French I, II, III and IV, will the Department of Education take the two highest grades or would the grades have to be from consecutive courses?

- A. The TOPS core requirement is to complete two courses in the same foreign language. The courses do not have to be consecutive. The rules require the two highest grades in a category to be used. In this case, the two French courses with the highest grades would be used.

If your school grades on an annual basis and you receive:

“A” for French I

“C” for French II

“B” for French III

“D” for French IV

The grades for French I and French III would be used to calculate your TOPS High School Cumulative GPA.

If your school grades on a semester basis and you receive:

“A” for the first semester and “B” for the second semester of French I ($4+3=7/2=3.5$),

“C” for the first semester and “A” for the second semester of French II ($2+4=6/2=3.0$),

“B” for the first semester and “B” for the second semester of French III ($3+3=6/2=3.0$),

“A” for the first semester and “A” for the second semester of French IV ($4+4=8/2=4.0$),

The grades for French I and French IV would be used to calculate your TOPS High School Cumulative GPA.

Q-128. My school requires a minimum grade of a “C” in a foreign language to enroll in the next course level. How will the core GPA be calculated if I have a “D” in Spanish I, a “B” in Spanish 1 and a “B” in Spanish 2?

- A. The highest two grades will be used. In this case, the “B” in Spanish I and the “B” in Spanish II will be used.

Q-129. At my school, credits earned in the 8th grade, such as Algebra I, are recorded as “P” on my high school record. How will this be treated in the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average calculation? Will a grade point value be assigned to the P grade and the total grade points divided by 17.5? Or, will the total grade points be divided by 16.5?

- A. The grade points will be divided by 16.5. If a course is graded on a pass/fail basis, the $\frac{1}{2}$ unit or unit earned will not be included to calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average, but passed courses will be used to satisfy the TOPS core curriculum requirements.

If you will graduate in 2014 or later, you will be required to earn 19 TOPS Core Curriculum units, but the same procedure will be used for courses that are graded as a “P”.

Q-130. My school offers semester electives in English IV. Can I use the course names for the specific electives,

or must they be recorded as English IV?

- A. You must complete English IV. There are no substitutes for English IV. Your school must report that you passed English IV on the Student Transcript System.

Q-131. I took Spanish I in semester 1 and earned ½ unit. I was proficient, so my school advanced me to Spanish II for the second semester and I earned ½ unit in Spanish II, excelling again. In semesters three and four, I earned one full credit in Spanish III. Will this fulfill the foreign language requirement?

- A. Yes. In fact, if your school reports all three courses on the Student Transcript System, the extra Spanish can be used to substitute for computer or Fine Arts Survey through 2013 graduates.

Q-132. If I take ½ unit of Probability and Statistics and ½ unit of Advanced Math –Functions and Statistics, will this be accepted for the 1 unit of advanced math requirement?

- A. Yes. However, you will need to contact LOSFA for a manual evaluation of your transcript to have this combination considered as meeting the advanced math requirement.

Fine Arts Survey

Q-133. If I received a “D” in Fine Arts Survey and I have a higher grade in an extra TOPS core curriculum elective such as World Geography, will the grade for the elective substitute for Fine Arts Survey in the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average?

- A. Yes. The rules require use of the highest grade in a category. If you have completed performance arts, visual arts, studio arts or an extra core elective that has a higher grade than Fine Arts Survey, the grade for the substitute will be used to calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average. If you do not take Fine Arts Survey, then the highest grade you earned on eligible performance arts, visual arts or studio arts or an extra core elective will be used.

Q-134. If I received a D in Fine Arts Survey and I also have 2 units of Studio Art with an A in one unit and a B in one unit, which do you use to calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average?

- A. Since the Studio Arts courses have the higher grades, they will be used to calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average.

Q-135. If I fail Fine Arts Survey and do not repeat the course, but I have an eligible elective to substitute, how is the GPA calculated?

- A. The Fine Arts Survey course will not be considered because a failed course cannot be used to complete the TOPS core curriculum. See the first question and answer in this section. The eligible elective will be used in the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average.

Q-136. If I take two band courses to substitute for one Fine Arts Survey course, do you average the two band course grades?

- A. Yes. See the answer to Question 130.

Q-137. I took one year of Beginning Chorus and earned an "A" the first semester and a "B" the second semester and then I took Advanced Vocal Ensemble and earned an "A" the first semester and an "A" the second semester. Can I take the first semester "A" of Beginning Chorus and the second semester

"A" of Advanced Vocal Ensemble to equal one whole unit of the required two units of a performing art for purposes of meeting the Fine Arts Survey Requirement? I would go on to take another year of a performing art by completing Advanced Vocal Ensemble II, thus giving me a total of two units of a performing art.

- A. Yes. $\frac{1}{2}$ units of a one unit course may be separated and matched with $\frac{1}{2}$ units of other courses of the same program type (performance, studio or visual arts) to substitute for Fine Arts Survey. STS cannot make this calculation. Contact LOSFA by email at custserv@osfa.la.gov or by mail for recalculation.

Q-138. What are the changes in Fine Arts Survey for students graduating in 2014 and later?

- A. There are two changes. First, only one unit (instead of two units) will be needed to satisfy the Fine Arts Survey requirement. Second, an extra core elective cannot be used to substitute for Fine Arts Survey.

Computer Science

COMPUTER SCIENCE IS NOT IN THE TOPS CORE CURRICULUM FOR STUDENTS GRADUATING IN 2014 AND LATER.

THE FOLLOWING APPLIES TO STUDENTS WHO WILL GRADUATE IN 2012 or 2013.

Q-139. If I DO NOT take a computer related course for the $\frac{1}{2}$ unit but I have one whole unit of, say, Environmental Science, is the Louisiana Department of Education going to calculate a full unit of that elective OR as a $\frac{1}{2}$ unit?

- A. It will count as $\frac{1}{2}$ unit. If your school grades on an annual basis, the grade for the year will be used. If your school grades on a semester basis, the two grades will be averaged for the GPA calculation.

Q-140. If I earn a "C" in Business Computer Applications, do I have to use that specific course or can I substitute an extra academic course (math, science, social studies or foreign language) not currently being used? For example: Advanced Math – Pre Calculus with a "B."

- A. Yes. The rules require use of the highest grade in a category. If you have completed a substitute course or an extra TOPS core curriculum elective that has a higher grade than Business Computer Applications, the grade for the substitute will be used to calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average. If you have not taken Computer Science, Computer Literacy or Business Computer Applications, then the highest grade earned in an eligible substitute course or an extra core elective will be used.

EARLY COLLEGE ADMISSIONS

Q-141. If I enter college under the Department of Education's Early College Admissions Policy, when do I become eligible for TOPS?

- A. If you enter college under the Early College Admissions Policy, you are not eligible for TOPS until the first semester following the date you graduate from high school. To be eligible for TOPS, you must follow the same application procedures as any other graduate of the same academic year. You must enroll as a full-time student in an eligible college no later than the semester or term, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the first anniversary of the date that you graduated from high school.

Q-142. Are there any special TOPS requirements for students who enter college under the Early College

Admissions Policy?

- A. You must enter college early under this Policy and meet the following requirements:
1. You must meet the requirements of the Louisiana Department of Education as set forth in the Early College Admissions Policy in the latest edition of Bulletin 741.
 2. You must satisfy all core curriculum requirements not completed in high school by making passing scores on equivalent college courses.
 3. The college courses taken to satisfy TOPS core curriculum requirements and the grades reported on those courses must be reflected in your official high school records as reported by the Louisiana Department of Education through the Student Transcript System.
 4. You must complete the core curriculum requirements no later than the conclusion of the first two semesters or three quarters of college attendance following entrance into college under the Early College Admissions Policy.
 5. The high school must award you a high school diploma and transmit your academic transcript to the Louisiana Department of Education in the same manner as that of other high school graduates.

Q-143. I am a home study student. Can I qualify for the early admissions program?

- A. No. To be eligible for the early admissions program, Bulletin 741 requires you to have earned at least a “B” average during the previous three years of high school and to be recommended for the program by your high school principal.

EARLY GRADUATION

Q-144. If I graduate from high school in less than four years, when will I be eligible for TOPS?

- A. If you graduate early (whether in September or at mid-year), you cannot be determined eligible for a TOPS award until your high school submits grades at the end of the school year. If you enroll in the spring semester immediately following graduation and are determined eligible for a TOPS award, you will receive a retroactive payment for that spring semester.

If you graduate early in the spring (graduate in three years) and meet TOPS eligibility requirements, you may be awarded for the fall semester following graduation.

You must make sure you have completed the TOPS Core Curriculum prior to graduation. You will not be allowed to complete TOPS Core Curriculum courses after high school graduation.

If you graduate early, you must comply with the application and ACT deadlines applicable to the class that graduates in the spring of that high school academic year. If you graduate early in December 2011 or graduate early in May 2012, you must follow the same application procedures and meet the same deadlines as students who graduate on time in May or June 2012. See the answer to Question 19).

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

Q-145. Can I use TOPS at any postsecondary school?

- A. No. TOPS can only be used at an “eligible institution” (Louisiana public postsecondary schools and regionally accredited independent colleges or universities in the state that are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU) and beginning with 2005 graduates, accredited out-of-state private colleges that are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students at which the majority of the students are deaf and hard of hearing).

Eligible LAICU schools are: Centenary College, Dillard University, Louisiana College, Loyola University, New Orleans Theological Seminary, Our Lady of the Lake College, Our Lady of Holy Cross College, St. Joseph Seminary College, Tulane Medical Center, Tulane University and Xavier University.

Effective with the graduating class of 2009, if you qualify for the TOPS Tech Award and effective with the graduating class of 2010, if you qualify for the TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award, you may also use the award at the following schools:

- 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 U.S. Department of Education, and
- Any proprietary school with a valid and current license issued by the Louisiana Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Q-146. If I want to pursue a program of study that is not offered in Louisiana, can I use TOPS in another state?

- A. No. TOPS is not portable to other states, except when used at an accredited out-of-state private colleges that are specifically designed to accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students at which the majority of the students are deaf and hard of hearing. See the answer to Question 148.

The TOPS award cannot be used to enroll in an out-of-state college through the **Academic Common Market**. The Academic Common Market, which is administered in Louisiana by the Board of Regents, allows a student whose major is not offered in Louisiana to pay in-state tuition at a school in the next adjoining southern state which offers the major. Contact the Louisiana Board of Regents for additional information or visit the Board of Regent's Web site at www.regents.la.gov.

Q-147. If I want to study at an out-of-state college or university, can I return to Louisiana and use my TOPS award?

- A. Yes.

SEE THE ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS 44 and 45 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES.

Q-148. What is an eligible out-of-state college or university?

- A. The out-of-state college or university must be accredited by a regional accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. The organizations currently recognized are:
1. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
 2. New England Association of Schools and Colleges
 3. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
 4. Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities
 5. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
 6. Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Q-149. Can TOPS ever be used at an out-of-state college?

- A. Yes. Students graduating during and after the 2004-2005 Academic Year can use the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors awards at accredited out-of-state private colleges that are specifically designed to

accommodate deaf and hard-of-hearing students at which the majority of the students are deaf and hard of hearing.

FIRST-TIME, FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENT

Q-150. Is there a deadline to enroll in college?

- A. Yes. You must enroll for the first time as a full-time student in an eligible postsecondary institution no later than the first college semester following the first anniversary of the date you graduated from high school. If you graduate in May 2012, you have until the fall semester of 2013 to enroll as a first-time, full-time student.

Once you enroll as a full-time student, you must continue to enroll full-time in each semester (fall and spring), quarter (fall, winter and spring), or term (in proprietary and cosmetology schools) thereafter, unless granted an exception for cause.

Q-151. I had an accident or have an illness that started after I graduated from high school, and I am unable to enroll as a full-time student by the deadline due to my injuries/illness. Is there any way I can retain my TOPS Award?

- A. Yes. There are certain circumstances for which an exception may be granted for failure to initially enroll full-time within the allotted time period (the first semester following the first anniversary of the date of high school graduation). These include such temporary disabilities as those caused by accidents/illnesses. A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov

Q-152. I entered on active duty within a year after high school graduation and before I enrolled full-time in college. Is there an exception to the initial enrollment deadline in these circumstances?

- A. Yes. You can delay your full-time enrollment to the semester (not including summer sessions) until five years after the date of high school graduation or the semester following the one year anniversary of separation from active duty, whichever is earlier. If your initial enlistment is extended (voluntarily or involuntarily) so that the initial enrollment is later than five years after high school graduation, an exception to the initial enrollment requirement is available if you submit a timely request for exception. **A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform),** obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

If you re-enlist, this exception is not available and you are not eligible to receive your TOPS award.

Q-153. If I enroll in an out-of-state college the first year as a full-time student, can I return to Louisiana and be awarded TOPS?

- A. Yes.

SEE THE ANSWER TO QUESTION 44 FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION REGARDING REQUIREMENTS AND DEADLINES.

Q-154. Do I lose eligibility for a TOPS Award by attending college during high school or during summer

sessions before enrolling as a full-time college student?

- A. No. You are allowed to enroll in college full or part-time while still attending high school and between graduation and first-time, full-time enrollment; **however, your college grades will be used to calculate your TOPS college cumulative grade point average for renewal of your TOPS award.**

(See the answer to Question 59 for renewal requirements.)

Q-155. If I attend college during high school or during summer sessions before enrolling as a full-time college student, will my grades or hours disqualify me from a TOPS award?

- A. No. If you earn college hours under these circumstances, and you otherwise qualify for a TOPS Award, you will receive the award for the first semester of full-time enrollment. **However, your cumulative grade point average (including courses taken while in high school and during summers) will be checked after the first semester of full-time enrollment for Steady Academic Progress (at least a 2.00 cumulative GPA). If you have not maintained Steady Academic Progress, your award will be suspended (the award will not be paid the next semester) until Steady Academic Progress has been achieved).**

See the answer to Question 59 for more information regarding the required cumulative GPA and Steady Academic Progress.

GRADUATION RECOGNITION

Q-156. As a high school guidance counselor, what terminology should I use to recognize a potential TOPS recipient at graduation?

A. It is inappropriate for the high school to state that a student is eligible for or has been awarded TOPS.

The high school electronically forwards the student's academic transcript through the Local Education Agency via the Student Transcript System (STS) to the Louisiana Department of Education, which will determine each student's compliance with the TOPS core curriculum requirements and compute the student's highest TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average. LOSFA will determine the student's eligibility after graduation. Eligibility is also based on official ACT/SAT scores, timely receipt of application, compliance with the requirement to apply for federal grant aid and information relating to the student's citizenship, residency and criminal record.

If the high school elects to notify students of their tentative TOPS eligibility based upon data available to the school, the high school must make the following disclaimer:

“Although it appears that you have satisfied the academic requirements for a Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) Award based on this school's review of the TOPS core curriculum courses you have completed and calculation of your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average, you must meet all of the following conditions to redeem a scholarship under this program:

1. The Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LASFAC) must determine that you have in fact completed the TOPS core curriculum courses;
2. LASFAC must determine that your TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average based on the TOPS core curriculum meets the statutory requirements;

3. You must be a Louisiana resident as defined by LASFAC;
4. You must be accepted for enrollment by an eligible Louisiana postsecondary institution and be registered as a full-time undergraduate student no later than the next semester following the first anniversary of your graduation from high school;
5. You must apply for federal student aid, if eligible for such aid, by the deadline required for consideration for state aid; and
6. You must have met all academic and nonacademic requirements and be officially notified of your award by LASFAC.”

Q-157. I was notified at graduation that I have TOPS. Now, my college has no record of that award. What is going on?

- A. While some high schools honor their graduates by naming those who are expected to qualify for a TOPS award, the only official notification that you have qualified for a TOPS scholarship is the letter notifying you of your TOPS eligibility from the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA).

HIGH SCHOOL EQUIVALENCY DIPLOMA (GED)

Q-158. If I have not graduated from an eligible high school and have not completed a BESE approved home study program, can I obtain a Louisiana High School Equivalency Diploma (GED) to qualify for TOPS?

- A. No. There are currently no provisions in law to permit students who earn a GED to qualify for TOPS.

HIGH SCHOOL REPORTING

Also see the Student Transcript System Section.

Q-159. What are the certification responsibilities of the high schools?

- A. Starting with the graduating class of 2003, high schools must electronically submit academic data for their students using the Department of Education’s Student Transcript System. Submission of the data constitutes a certification by the high school that:
 1. All data reported are true and correct, to the best of the school’s knowledge or belief, and that they reflect the official records of the school for the students listed; and
 2. Records pertaining to the listed students will be maintained and available upon request to LASFAC and the legislative auditor for a minimum of three years or until audited, whichever occurs first.

Commencing with the 2003 Academic Year (High School), if a student is determined to be eligible for a TOPS Award based on data certified by the high school that is incorrect, and the student was, in fact, ineligible for a TOPS Award or the level awarded, the high school must reimburse LASFAC for the amount paid in excess of what the student was eligible to receive.

Q-160. What data will high schools report?

- A. High schools will be required to report the same data that is included on the student’s official transcript.

Q-161. How will high schools report the data?

- A. Public high schools submit their data through their Local Education Authority (LEA). LEAs and nonpublic high schools will report their data to the Louisiana Department of Education using the Student Transcript

System (STS).

HOME STUDY PROGRAMS

Q-162. I am a home study student. Can I receive TOPS and, if so, are there any special requirements?

- A. Yes. The Louisiana Department of Education must certify to LOSFA that you are a student who successfully completed the eleventh, if applicable, and twelfth grade levels of a home study program approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE).

If you ever enrolled in a Louisiana public high school or nonpublic high school or an approved non-Louisiana high school that was or has been approved by BESE, you must have successfully completed both the eleventh and twelfth grades of a home study program approved by BESE and the previously attended high school must provide LOSFA with certification that you were in good standing at the time you last attended that school.

In addition, if you completed the BESE approved home study program in 2008 or later, you must have an ACT score of at least 19 for TOPS Tech, 22 for Opportunity, 24 for Performance, or 28 for Honors, or an SAT score of at least 900 for TOPS Tech, 1020 for Opportunity, 1090 for Performance or 1250 for Honors.

Q-163 I am a home study student. How does LOSFA know that I am interested in applying for TOPS?

- A. Home study students are identified by the high school code they included on their ACT or SAT Registration. You should use the high school code 969999 on the ACT and 970000 on the SAT. These codes will cause your name to be placed on a list of students to be verified by the Louisiana Department of Education (LDE) as having being registered in an approved home study program.

If you complete the FAFSA, you will be asked, "When you begin college in the 2012-2013 school year, what will be your high school completion status?" If you mark "home schooled" after this question, LOSFA will include your name on the list sent to LDE if you have an ACT or SAT score of at least 19.

If you complete the TOPS On-Line Application, you will be asked to name the high school you attended or that you were in a home study program. If you answer "home study", LOSFA will include your name on the list sent to LDE if you have an ACT or SAT score of at least 19.

Q-164. Is a home study student eligible for TOPS in an early admissions program?

- A. No. Only students enrolled in public or BESE approved private high schools are eligible for early college admissions under the Department of Education's Early College Admissions Policy. For additional information, see the section above entitled "Early College Admissions."

NATIONAL GUARD

Q-165 Can I receive a TOPS award if I join the National Guard?

- A. Yes. If you are eligible for a TOPS award and are in the Louisiana National Guard, you are exempt from tuition for an amount equal to a TOPS award, so the TOPS award is not paid. However, you will receive \$600 per year for assistance with additional costs. Students with Performance Awards will receive a stipend of \$400 per semester. Students with Honors Awards will receive a stipend of \$800 per semester.

If you are eligible for the National Guard Tuition Exemption, you must accept that award, and the TOPS

National Guard Stipend. You may not accept TOPS instead of the National Guard Tuition Exemption.

OUT-OF-COUNTRY HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES AND HOME STUDY PROGRAMS

Q-166. 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 “Residency Requirement” section below.

If you meet the alternate eligibility requirements (See the answer to Question 168) to qualify, you can only qualify for the TOPS Tech or TOPS Opportunity Award.

Q-167. 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 grade (if you previously were enrolled in a Louisiana public or BESE approved private high school), and the twelfth grade levels of a home study program 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, excluding summer semesters or sessions, immediately following the fifth anniversary of the date that you graduated from high school or the semester immediately following the one year of separation from active duty, whichever is earlier; and
7. Must be a U.S. citizen or designated as a Permanent Resident by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services; and
8. Must meet Louisiana residency requirements; 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.

*For students returning to Louisiana after attending an accredited out-of-state postsecondary institution, refer to the answers to Questions 44, 45, 68, 69, 148, and 154.

Q-168. What do I have to do to prove Louisiana residency?

- A. See the discussion in the Section entitled “Residency Requirement.” If your parents or court ordered custodian work out-of-country, they must submit a sworn Affidavit of Residency before Louisiana residency can be confirmed. You should contact LOSFA for this affidavit or download a copy at

Q-169. I graduated from a high school outside the United States and its territories. My parents are missionaries and are not paid enough to require that they file an income tax return. They do not have Louisiana driver's licenses or own a car registered in Louisiana and are not registered to vote in Louisiana. Can I qualify for a TOPS Award?

A. Possibly. The TOPS statute provides an alternate residency test that may be used instead of the standard residency test:

When you graduate from an out-of-country high school, your parent(s) (if living out-of-the country/working out-of-the country) must complete an out-of-country residency affidavit and submit documentary support declaring:

1. I actually resided in Louisiana at least 24 months before I started living outside the United States and its territories and have not resided in any other state since leaving Louisiana; and
2. I was assigned duties outside the United States and its territories by a Louisiana employer or Louisiana sponsor and continued to be employed by that employer or perform duties for that sponsor through the date of your graduation from high school; and
3. I have remained a resident of Louisiana through the date of your graduation from high school.

When you complete a BESE approved home study program outside the United States and its territories and your parent(s) resides outside the United States, your parent(s) must complete an affidavit and submit documentary evidence declaring:

1. I actually resided in Louisiana at least 24 months before I started living outside the United States and its territories and have not resided in any other state since leaving Louisiana; and
2. I was assigned duties outside the United States and its territories by a Louisiana employer or Louisiana sponsor and continued to be employed by that employer or perform duties for that sponsor through the date you completed the home study program; and
3. I have remained a resident of Louisiana through the date of your completion of the home study program.

OUT-OF-STATE HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Q-170. 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 answers to Questions 178 through 192 for the residency requirements.

Q-171. What is the purpose of the alternate eligibility requirements?

A. These requirements permit students who qualify as Louisiana residents and who graduated from 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-172. 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

2. Must graduate from an out-of-state high school that is accredited by a regional 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
3. Must graduate from a high school that has been approved by the U.S. Department of Defense; and
4. Must have a composite score on the ACT (SAT) of at least 20 for TOPS Tech, 23 for Opportunity, 26 for Performance, and 30 for Honors; and
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, 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
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 TOPS eligible college or university as a first-time freshman not later than the semester, excluding summer semesters or intersessions, immediately following the fifth anniversary of the date that you graduated from high school or the one year anniversary of separation from active duty, whichever is earlier; and
7. Must be a U.S. citizen or be designated as a Permanent Resident by the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services; and
8. Must meet Louisiana residency requirements (will be required to complete a residency affidavit); 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; and
11. Must complete and submit an Application to Return from an Out-of-State College so that it is received by LOSFA no later than the July 1 immediately after the academic year you first return to Louisiana and enroll as a full-time student in an eligible Louisiana college. See the answers to Questions 44 and 45.

*NOTE: The organizations currently recognized are:

- a. Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools
- b. New England Association of Schools and Colleges
- c. North Central Association of Colleges and Schools
- d. Northwest Association of Accredited Schools
- e. Southern Association of Colleges and Schools
- f. Western Association of Schools and Colleges

PERMANENT DISABILITY

Q-173. What if I qualify for a TOPS Award, but cannot attend college on a full-time basis because of a permanent disability?

- A. You may be eligible for an exception to the full-time enrollment requirement. The student must submit a Request for Exception form to LOSFA requesting permanent disability Status. The form must include a written statement from a qualified professional that states:
1. the diagnosis of disability and prognosis,
 2. that the disability is permanent, and
 3. an opinion as to why the disability restricts the student from attending classes full-time.

Note that having a permanent disability is not enough to warrant the exception since many permanent disabilities do not prevent the student from enrolling full-time and progressing in college because the disability can be treated with therapy or medications, and/or overcome with appropriate accommodations.

A Request for Exception form with instructions describing the documentation required can be found on the

LOSFA Web site at (www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform), obtained directly from LOSFA or by emailing custserv@osfa.la.gov.

If permanent disability status is approved, you will be paid TOPS and stipends, if applicable, up to the equivalent of eight full-time semesters or twelve terms of postsecondary education, for part time attendance.

Q-174. I have ADD or ADHD, or a physical disability such as blindness or deafness. Will I automatically be designated as having a permanent disability?

- A. No. The fact that you have a disability that cannot be cured is not enough. Since most students with these disabilities can function normally with medication and/or with accommodations, there must be evidence that you cannot enroll on a full-time basis, even with medication and accommodations, due to the disability.

QUALIFYING AS A NON-GRADUATE

Q-175. If I enroll in college without graduating from high school, can I qualify for a TOPS Award?

- A. Yes, if you meet certain conditions.
You must:
- Meet the TOPS citizenship and ACT requirements prior to college enrollment.
 - Actually reside in Louisiana for a period of 24 months prior to full-time enrollment in an eligible college.
 - Be certified by a psychologist or psychiatrist licensed to practice in Louisiana to have a score in the superior range on the Wechsler Intelligence Scale for Children (Third Edition).
 - Be certified by a psychologist or psychiatrist licensed to practice in Louisiana to have a composite score that is in the ninetieth percentile at the twelfth grade level in reading, mathematics and written language portions of the Wechsler Individual Achievement Test (Second Edition).
 - Successfully complete 12 credit hours at an eligible college or university.
 - After completion of 12 college credit hours and no later than your 19th birthday, begin full-time college enrollment.
 - Submit a FAFSA or TOPS On-Line Application.

For qualifying non-graduates awarded TOPS, the award provides up to eight semesters of eligibility.

Q-176. Is there a deadline for taking the Wechsler Tests to be considered for TOPS eligibility?

- A. Yes. You must have taken the tests prior to enrolling for the first time in an eligible college or university.

REMEDIAL COLLEGE COURSES

Q-177. Are remedial courses part of the 24 credit hours required annually in college?

- A. Remedial (developmental) courses may be counted toward the 24 hour requirement, if the college attended reports them as earned (passed) hours. If you receive a grade other than "pass" for a remedial class, that grade will be used in the computation of your TOPS cumulative grade point average.

RESIDENCY REQUIREMENT

Q-178. What is the Louisiana residency requirement?

- A. Beginning with Academic Year (High School) 2002-2003, any independent or dependent student who

actually resides in Louisiana while attending his last two full years at an eligible Louisiana high school and graduates from such a school will meet the Louisiana residency requirement. Your high school transcript must reflect that you earned credit for the last four semesters of high school and graduated from an approved

Louisiana high school. This information is reported by the high school using the Department of Education's Student Transcript System.

If you are a dependent student, you may qualify based on the residency of a parent or court ordered custodian ("legal guardian") who was a legal resident of Louisiana for at least the 24 months prior to the month of your high school graduation. If you are an independent student, you must have been a legal resident of Louisiana for at least the 24 months prior to the month of your high school graduation.

If you are a dependent student who graduated from high school in 2001 or later and your parent is a member of the U.S. Armed Forces living in Louisiana under permanent change of station orders, but who does not claim Louisiana as his official state of legal residence, and you actually reside in Louisiana while attending your last two full years at an eligible Louisiana high school and you graduate from such a school, and your transcript reflects that you earned credit for the last four semesters of high school and graduated from an approved Louisiana high school, you will meet the Louisiana residency requirement.

Q-179. How will LOSFA determine my residency?

- A. If you graduated from a Louisiana public or a Louisiana approved non-public high school, your residency will be determined from the Course Site Codes reported to the Department of Education's Student Transcript System (STS). STS must show that all courses completed during the final two years of high school were earned in an eligible Louisiana high school and that you graduated from an eligible Louisiana high school.

If you completed a BESE approved home study program or you are an eligible non-graduate, your residency will be determined from the information provided on your FAFSA or On-Line Application. If you are an out-of-state and out-of-country graduate, you must complete a residency affidavit in addition to the FAFSA or On-Line Application. If you are a home study student, an eligible non-graduate, a dependent of active duty military personnel, or a student for whom the STS does not confirm Louisiana residency, residency will be determined from the information provided on your FAFSA or On-Line Application or from a completed residency affidavit.

Q-180. I received a letter/observed on the LOSFA Web site that I have been determined ineligible for TOPS due to residency. I have lived in Louisiana all my life. Why has this happened and what must I do to correct the mistake?

- A. LOSFA's programming looks first at the information supplied by STS. If the STS data indicates you attended Louisiana schools for all of the 11th and 12th grades and you graduated from an eligible Louisiana high school, you will pass the residency requirement. A high school site code not recognized by STS will result in a determination that you do not meet the TOPS residency requirement.

If you do not meet the STS check, LOSFA's programming will check the information supplied on the FAFSA or On-Line Application. If the data indicates that your parent was a Louisiana resident for at least the 24 months preceding the month of your high school graduation and you are a dependent student, you will pass the residency requirement.

If residency information received from your FAFSA or On-Line Application is incorrect, you may complete

a TOPS Affidavit of Residency (available from LOSFA's Web site at <http://www.osfa.la.gov/resaffidavit> or from a LOSFA Public Information Representative by calling 1-800 259-5626 Extension 1012) and provide the required supporting documentation. You may also submit a Student Aid Report (SAR) correction to the data you provided in your FAFSA. See the instructions on the SAR.

If you are a dependent student who is qualifying based on the residency of a parent or court ordered custodian and your parent's or custodian's state or date of residency is incorrect on the FAFSA or On-Line Application, you should have your parent or custodian complete a TOPS residency affidavit and provide the required supporting documentation.

If you graduated from a high school outside of Louisiana and your parent's or custodian's state or date of residency is incorrect on the FAFSA or On-Line Application, you must have your parent or custodian complete a TOPS residency affidavit and provide the required supporting documentation.

Q-181. What is a legal resident?

- A. A "legal resident" is a person who:
- Resides (actually lives) in Louisiana and,
 - If registered to vote, has registered to vote in Louisiana as evidenced by a voter's registration card; and,
 - If licensed to drive a motor vehicle, has a Louisiana driver's license; and,
 - If owning a motor vehicle located in Louisiana, has registered that vehicle in Louisiana; and,
 - If earning a reportable income, has filed a Louisiana tax return.

If you are completing a TOPS Affidavit of Residency on behalf of your child, you will be required to submit a copy of all documents that were marked "YES". If none of the documents show an issue date of at least the 24 months before the month of your child's high school graduation, additional documentation will be required. (See the answer to Question 192.)

Q-182. What is a "court ordered custodian"?

- A. A "court ordered custodian" is an adult appointed by a court of competent jurisdiction to have custody and care of a minor and who demonstrates the requirement to provide the primary support for such minor (sometimes referred to as a "court appointed custodian"). Documents such as powers of attorney and Provisional Custody by Mandate are not acceptable since they are not issued by a court. The custodianship (court appointment) must be in effect before the date you graduate from high school to be considered.

Q-183. How do I know whether I am a dependent or independent student?

- A. All students are classified as dependent unless LOSFA determines the student is "independent" for purposes of TOPS. The determination may be based on information provided by you on the FAFSA or in documents provided to LOSFA. LOSFA will automatically classify you as independent if you are determined to be an "independent student" by a financial aid officer at a postsecondary institution or reported as an independent student by the federal processor on the FAFSA.

Q-184. What are the requirements to be an "independent student"?

- A. In order to be an independent student, you:
1. must have reached 24 years of age prior to January of the year preceding the academic year for which you are applying for aid; or
 2. be a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces; or
 3. be an orphan or a ward of the court or was a ward of the court until age 18; or

4. have legal dependents other than a spouse; or
5. be a graduate or professional student; or
6. be married; or
7. be determined an independent student by a financial aid officer exercising professional judgment in accordance with applicable provisions of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (**may include certain emancipated and homeless/self supporting students**); or
8. must currently be serving in the U.S. Armed Forces on active duty for purposes other than training.

Q-185. What are the requirements to be classified as an “orphan”?

- A. An orphan is a person who does not live with either parent because:
1. both parents are deceased; or
 2. both parents have abandoned him; or
 3. a court proceeding has severed the parental rights of both the parents; or
 4. one parent is deceased and the other parent abandoned him; or
 5. one parent is deceased and a court proceeding has severed the parental rights of the other parent; or
 6. one parent abandoned him and a court proceeding has severed the parental rights of the other parent.

Q-186. How do you calculate the 24 month period for residency of a parent, court ordered custodian or independent student?

- A. The TOPS statute requires residency for a period of the 24 months preceding the month of your high school graduation. Months are calendar months and are counted backward starting with the month preceding the month of high school graduation.

For example, if you will be graduating in May 2012, you would start counting with April 2012 and count backward 24 months. You would have to demonstrate legal residency from May 2010 through April 2012.

Q-187. I am a 2012 high school graduate and I have lived in Louisiana for most or all of my life. Why does the Web site show my date of residency as “2007”?

- A. The 2012-2013 FAFSA asks if your parent has been a legal resident since January 1, 2007 (five years). If the answer is “yes” to the residency question, the computer automatically enters “2007” as the date of residency. The date is simply a default date. There is no need to correct this because TOPS only requires the 24 consecutive months of residency preceding the month of your date of high school graduation.

If the computer picks up a “no” to the residency question, then it picks up the answer for the actual date of residency that you enter on the FAFSA.

Q-188. My grandparent is raising me because my parents have completely abandoned me, but my grandparent has never become my “court ordered custodian.” How will that affect my residency? What can I do to remedy this problem?

- A. If you are not independent (See the answer to Question 185.) and you did not complete all of your last two years at a Louisiana high school and graduate from such a school, then you must have one parent or a “court ordered custodian” who has been a resident of Louisiana for the 24 months preceding your graduation from high school. If your grandparent is not a “court ordered custodian,” if there is no parent who meets the Louisiana residency requirements, and you did not complete your last two years at a Louisiana high school and graduate from such a school, then you are ineligible for a TOPS Award.

Q-189. Can I qualify for TOPS if one or both of my parents are in the military and stationed outside of Louisiana? What documentation is needed for that?

- A. Yes. If your parent who is a member of the Armed Forces is on active duty and the official military personnel or pay records (DD Form 2058) show that he claims Louisiana as his legal residence, you will be eligible if the military parent has filed a Louisiana tax return for the two most recent tax years. You must submit a completed TOPS Affidavit of Residency, a copy of your parent's DD Form 2058 and a copy of both tax returns, and all other required documents listed on the affidavit.

Q-190. Can I qualify for TOPS if my parents were transferred by the military into Louisiana? What documentation is needed for that?

- A. Yes. If your parent was classified as a Louisiana resident when transferred to Louisiana, you can meet the residency requirements (See the previous question and answer.)

If your parent who is a member of the Armed Forces was not a Louisiana resident, you can meet the residency requirements if:

1. The military parent who is transferred to Louisiana under permanent change of station orders changes his DD Form 2058 to establish Louisiana as his legal residence not later than 180 days after reporting to such station and thereafter complies with all Louisiana income tax laws and regulations while stationed in Louisiana. You must submit to LOSFA a completed TOPS Affidavit of Residency and a copy of a DD Form 2058 validated by your parent's military personnel officer and showing Louisiana as the member's state of legal residence at the time you apply for TOPS. The DD Form 2058 must reflect that it was filed within 180 days after the member reported to a duty station in Louisiana.

OR

2. You actually resided in Louisiana while attending your last two full years at an eligible Louisiana high school and graduated from such a school. Your high school transcript must reflect that you earned credit for the last four semesters of high school immediately prior to graduation and graduated from an approved Louisiana high school. (Effective with the graduating class of 2001.)

OR

3. After the 180 day period, your parent who is a member of the Armed Forces may still become a Louisiana resident by changing the DD Form 2058 to declare Louisiana as his or her legal residence and paying Louisiana income taxes; however, your parent must reside in Louisiana for 24 months preceding the month you graduate from high school. See the answer to Question 178.

OR

4. Your parent who is not a member of Armed Forces (the spouse of the military member) may establish Louisiana as his or her legal residence and reside in Louisiana for 24 months preceding the month you graduate from high school. See the answer to Question 178.

Q-191. My parents are residents of Louisiana, but do not file tax returns, are not registered to vote, and do not drive. Can I be considered for TOPS?

- A. Yes. If you graduate from an eligible Louisiana high school or complete a home study program approved by BESE and submit a FAFSA or TOPS On-Line Application certifying that your parents are and have been residents of Louisiana for at least the 24 months preceding the month of your high school graduation, a TOPS Affidavit of Residency will not be required. If you graduate from an out-of-state or out-of-country high school, you are required to submit a TOPS Affidavit of Residency.

Otherwise, you must submit an affidavit of residency with documents that support one or both parents' residency in Louisiana for the required 24 months. The documents must show that one of your parents

actually resided in Louisiana for the 24 month period. The documents can include, but are not limited to, utility bills, rent payments, rental agreements, receipts or credit card invoices showing purchases in Louisiana, pay stubs, and sworn statements from others attesting to the residency. This list is illustrative only. Many other documents may suffice. Each student in this situation is reviewed individually, based on the information submitted, so you should contact LOSFA if you have questions or other documentation that is not included in this list.

Q-192. I attended boarding school in Louisiana for my final two years of high school. Can I meet the residency requirement for TOPS?

- A. Yes. If you graduated in 2003 or later, your transcript must reflect that you earned credit for the last four semesters of high school immediately prior to graduation and graduated from an approved Louisiana high school.

SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS

Q-193. If I discover that I used an incorrect social security number on either the ACT or SAT test, what can I do to correct this?

- A. You should contact a LOSFA Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012, or e-mail custserv@osfa.la.gov . You may be required to submit a copy of your social security card.

Q-194. If I discover that I used an incorrect social security number on the FAFSA, what can I do to correct this?

- A. If you filed the paper FAFSA form, you must file a new FAFSA with the correct social security number. For assistance, you can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (800) 433-3243.

Note: The application receipt date of the FAFSA with the wrong social security number will be used to determine whether the FAFSA was filed before the deadline.

If you filed the FAFSA on the Web, you must correct your social security number with FAFSA on the web. For assistance, you can contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (800) 433-3243.

Q-195. If I discover that I used an incorrect social security number on the TOPS On-Line Application, what can I do to correct this?

- A. You should contact a LOSFA Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012, or e-mail custserv@osfa.la.gov to have the application with the incorrect SSN deleted, and then you should file a new On-Line Application using the correct SSN.

STUDENT TRANSCRIPT SYSTEM (STS) – (For School Personnel)

The TOPS Core Curriculum Reference Tables used in the Student Transcript System are available on the Department of Education’s LEADS Portal, <https://leads.doe.louisiana.gov/ptl/> on the STSQ12 report and on LOSFA’s Web site, osfa.la.gov. Also available on these sites are the Course Code Tables.

Q-196. What is a LEA – Local Education Authority?

A. For public schools, a Local Education Authority, LEA, is your district school board. Public LEA's must certify graduate data for each site separately and must recertify whenever any graduate data at a site is updated or changed. For a Catholic non-public high school, the diocese is the LEA; however, individual diocesan high schools are responsible for their own data submission. For all other non-public high schools, the high school is its own LEA.

Q-197. How long will it take to get my user ID and password? How will I receive it?

A. It will take school personnel about a week to receive your ID and password. Non-public school requests for ID and password must be submitted via the appropriate request form to the Information Technology (IT) Division at LOSFA. E-mail helpdesk@osfa.la.gov or call (800) 259-5626 Ext. 1012 for assistance in obtaining and completing the request form.

Public schools are to contact the STS/SIS coordinator at their district office.

Q-198. Why can't I get my password via e-mail?

A. The Internet is not secure and this security policy is strictly enforced.

Q-199. How do I get my password changed?

A. The fastest way is to reset your password yourself, if it has not been revoked, by using the Password Reset System (PRS) online at <https://password.doe.louisiana.gov>. You must have set up your PRS account prior to needing to reset your password. PRS can be used to change expired or forgotten passwords. The PRS User Guide can be found at <https://password.doe.louisiana.gov/help.pdf>.

If you are a non-public school user and you have not set up PRS or your password is revoked, send an e-mail to helpdesk@osfa.la.gov and include the name of your school, your name, user-id, and a phone number where you can be reached.

Public school users who do not have PRS set up or their password is revoked must contact their STS Coordinator to have their password reset.

Q-200. Does it matter which version of Adobe Acrobat I use?

A. Yes. You should use 6.0 or higher. Free upgrades are available on the Internet.

Q-201. Does it matter which zip software is used for batch files?

A. We recommend that you Zip large batch files using WinZip or PKZIP

Q-202. How do I change a student's school assigned ID number to the correct Social Security Number (SSN) after I have submitted a batch file?

A. 1. In STS on the Web, you can update the State ID (SSN) on the Transcript List (Update Mode) screen OR by submitting a new batch file for the student. To change the number manually, click on the Change Student ID button in the lower right corner of the page. This will bring up a box for you to enter the new Student ID. After typing the new number in the box, click the Change Student ID button again to save the change. If you submit a new batch file for the student, you will need to manually delete the student record with the incorrect SSN. Remember to make the correction in your administrative software so the State ID number will be correct the next time you submit a batch

file.

2. Public schools must recertify the change.
3. Notify OTS (Official Transcript System) Staff at LDE so the duplicate transcript can be removed from OTS.

Q-203. How do I correct a student's SSN if I am using the online method of data entry?

- A. In STS on the Web, you can update the State ID (SSN) on the Transcript List (Update Mode) screen. Click on the Change Student ID button in the lower right corner of the page. This will bring up a box for you to enter the new Student ID. After typing the new number in the box, click the Change Student ID button again to save the change. If the student has previously been certified, notify LOSFA of the change if the change is not due to a typographical error, and notify OTS (Official Transcript System) Staff at LDE so the duplicate transcript can be removed from OTS.

Q-204. When submitting data by batch file, can I submit student data one year at a time (for example: submitting only the ninth grade and then adding each year as they were completed)?

- A. No. You cannot "add to" an individual student's records by submitting the student's 9th grade data in one batch file and submitting a second batch file with only the 10th grade data, expecting the records to accumulate. The student's data from the first file would be deleted and the student would end up with only 10th grade records because the 9th grade records would have been deleted. If you want to submit the student's 9th grade data and, when 10th grade data is ready, "add" these records to the file so the file then contains both 9th and 10th grade records, you must submit both the 9th and 10th grade data in the batch file. This will assure that both sets of grades are in the database. If the batch file contains only the 10th grade data, the 9th grade data on the database will be deleted and replaced with only the 10th grade data.

The same procedure would apply for the grades for the 11th and 12th grade data. To submit complete grade data for a graduating student, the grade data for the 9th through the 12th grades must be included in the batch file.

Q-205. Can I key in a student record alone then go back and enter transcript data?

- A. No. When entering a student record, at least one transcript record must be entered for the student data to be accepted.

Q-206. If I am entering data through the online system, is there an easy way to add standard redundant information without having to key in the same information on each transcript record?

- A. Yes. In STS on the Web, the default data values are automatically included. You will not need to turn the default values on. The following fields have defaulted values:

GRADE POINT MAX: 4.0
SEMESTER: Y1
CREDIT ATTEMPTED: 1.0
CREDIT EARNED: 1.0
COURSE TYPE: REGULAR
CORE COURSE WAIVER: N
DISTANCE LRN TYPE CD: N/A
COURSE SPONSOR: *the school's sponsor code*

Q-207. How will I know if my student has met TOPS requirements after I submit the transcript data?

- A. With STS on the Web, GPA calculations will be made each time a change is made to a transcript record.

To view TOPS data, select the Core Progress Button then click on the core curriculum you are interested in viewing. This screen will show the student's TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average along with which courses were used to calculate the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average. Categories will be highlighted. (The categories have not yet been completed.) This will indicate whether the student has completed the Core Curriculum and GPA requirements for TOPS. It does not give you the student's final TOPS eligibility status.

Eligibility is determined each Thursday night (new programming may allow eligibility to be determined each work day in the future). If a student's application, ACT/SAT data, and STS data have been received under the same social security number, programming can determine TOPS eligibility.

Q-208. Does a student's record have to be deleted from my records if they transfer from my school?

- A. No. Leave the records on your system for the current academic year, BUT do not insert a graduation date. After the system rolls over to the next academic year, delete the student from your school. Use the following procedure:

Batch – Move forward all students that do not have a graduation date. After the rollover, send a Type 3 file. This will delete all students that rolled over and will replace them with the students at your school for the current year.

Online – Delete students after the rollover. Manually change grade levels.

Q-209. For home school or home study students who transfer to my school, is there a site code for home school or home study or do we just put "home school" or "home study" in the course site name field?

- A. If you are entering a course for a home school/ home study student, enter "home school" or "home study" as appropriate on the course site name field at the bottom of the transcript record.

Q-210. If a student takes a course that is graded on an annual basis but ½ was taken at one school and ½ at another school, how do we enter that in the transcript record?

- A. If a student takes two parts of a class at two different BESE approved Louisiana schools, it is entered on two transcript records showing Part 1 taken for .5 credits with .5 credits earned at one school then Part 2 taken for .5 with .5 credits earned. However, if you give a final grade that includes the transfer semester grade, submit only a final grade as Y1.

If the student takes two parts of a class at two different BESE approved high schools, the two parts of the course must be entered as Part 1 for 0.5 credits and Part 2 for 0.5 credits earned each with the appropriate Sponsor and Site Code or Site Location.

If the student takes two parts of a class at two different schools, one a BESE approved high school and one an out-of-state high school, the two parts of the course must be entered as Part 1 for 0.5 credits and Part 2 for 0.5 credits each with the appropriate Sponsor and Site Code or Course Site Name for the part of the course taken in Louisiana and the high school name in the Transcript Site Name field for the part taken out-of-state. This is for the purpose of checking the student's residency.

Enter the Course Site Code for correspondence courses for which the high school gives credit for graduation.

Q-211. Our school uses semester grades only on our transcripts. We also allow a student who earns an “F” in the first semester but earns a passing grade the second semester to earn a full credit for the course. How do we submit these grades?

A. You can send a combination of S1, S2 for some courses and Y1 for other courses. In this case, to receive credit for a whole unit, submit the course as a Y1 with a final grade. The system will not recognize the ½ unit as credit if the grade equals “F”. You should make a note on the student’s cum card that it is your school’s policy to give the student a passing grade for the year if the second semester is passed since this will cause STS not to match the cum card.

Q-212. How do I report courses earned with “P”?

A. A course with an earned grade of “P” can only be entered as Y1 – Year Long Course. Programming will not allow the ‘Course Part Number’ field to be populated. A student cannot receive a grade of “P” for one part of a course and a letter grade for the other part of the course. The same will apply to courses given an “E” (Exempt).

Q-213. When should a Course Part Number be reported on STS Records?

A. The Course Part Number must be supplied whenever a one-unit course is submitted as two ½ unit records. If you submit a one-unit course as a single one-unit record, leave the Course Part Number blank.

FAILURE TO INCLUDE A COURSE PART NUMBER WILL RESULT IN NO CREDIT FOR THE ½ UNIT OF THE COURSE AND COULD RESULT IN THE STUDENT’S INELIGIBILITY FOR TOPS.

Please Note: If the TOPS core curriculum requirement is one unit of credit, and you submit a one unit course as two ½ unit records without the Course Part Number, the program calculating core requirements will not recognize the course.

Examples: two possible CORRECT ways to submit a one-unit course:

Correct Method #1 (submit as one record)

Record Number	Course Code	Course Description	Course Part Number	Credit Attempted	Credit Earned	Letter Grade
1	150301	Biology		1.0	1.0	B

Correct Method #2 (Submit as two ½ unit records with the Course Part Number)

Record Number	Course Code	Course Description	Course Part Number	Credit Attempted	Credit Earned	Letter Grade
1	150301	Biology	1	.5	.5	B
2	150301	Biology	2	.5	.5	B

The example listed below is **incorrect and will not be recognized** as a one-unit TOPS requirement:

Record Number	Course Code	Course Description	Course Part Number	Credit Attempted	Credit Earned	Letter Grade
1	150301	Biology		.5	.5	B
2	150301	Biology		.5	.5	B

A one-unit course, submitted as two ½ unit records without the Course Part Numbers is an invalid entry.

STS will interpret this scenario as the student took the first part of the course twice and it will perform a delete/repeat resulting in 0.5 credit for the course.

Q-214. If a student transfers, will the receiving school have to re-enter all of the transcript data?

- A. No. There is a Re-Assignment feature in STS On the Web. Re-Assignment for a student who is transferring to your school for the 2011-2012 academic year should not be performed until after the STS Data Rollover on October 1, 2011.

Q-215. How is a correspondence course defined in the semester fields when it does not fall into one specific semester or does not take a full year?

- A. If the course is for a full credit put Y1. If it is for a ½ credit, put the most appropriate semester code for that course.

Q-216. If I put that a course is graded on a 5.00 scale but, in error, put "RG" in the Course Type field, will STS catch that I made a mistake?

- A. STS will NOT automatically assume that a course which has a value of 5.0 is an honors course. You must enter HR (AP or GT as appropriate) in the Course Type Field. If the data has already been transmitted, make an on-line correction or, if there are numerous corrections, resubmit the batch file. **All corrected records must be recertified.**

Q-217. When entering a course that was taken at another in-state school, does the course site code have to be used or can the school enter the school name on the site name line?

- A. The appropriate Sponsor and Site Codes are required for all courses taken in Louisiana. Failure to use the Sponsor and Site Codes for an approved Louisiana high school can result in the student not being considered a Louisiana resident.

Q-218. If a student takes English IV more than once, will the system automatically take the highest grade?

- A. Yes, the system will know to take the highest grade. The key will be to include the academic year(s) or semester in which the repeated course was taken.

Q-219. What course codes do I use for religion courses that we teach?

- A. If your school offers more than four religion courses, use other general elective course codes for these courses. Non-public schools should use the course codes for Religion for Non-public schools I-IV.

Bulletin 741 requires that any elective that is offered at a non-public school must first have the approval of the LDE. If you have any electives that have not been approved, have your school administrator contact the Division of Student Standards and Assessments at the LDE.

Q-220. If a student takes Advanced Chorus more than once, how do I enter it so the system knows that the course is not a repeat/delete course?

- A. Within the STS and the TOPS Reference Tables, the following music courses (according to Bulletin 741) are allowed to repeat for credit:

Advanced Band	030302
Wind Ensemble	030303

Jazz Ensemble	030304
Advanced Choir	030312
Small Vocal Ensemble	030313
Advanced Orchestra	030322
Applied Music	030360
Studio Piano III	030363
Advanced Dance	030611
Advanced Theater	030711

These courses can be repeated for credit up to 8 times; a student can have multiple occurrences of these courses in their TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average calculation.

For schools transmitting data online, course codes for these ten have been added to the STS and TOPS Reference Tables that will allow you to indicate second, third and fourth year of the repeatable course. Refer to the current course code list for the additional codes.

For those schools submitting batch files, enter the repeatable course code for each Academic Year in which the course was taken. The LDE programming that receives the data will automatically convert the repeated course into the format of second credit, third credit and so on.

Q-221. How do I enter a ½ credit course that is a year-long course?

- A. A ½ credit course that is a year-long course is entered as “Y1” with 0.5 credits attempted.

Q-222. Can I enter a course as a 0.25 credit?

- A. Yes.

Q-223. Can the graduation date be changed once it is entered?

- A. Yes. **For non-public schools**, the graduation date should be entered only when the student has completed all of the requirements for graduation. When the date is entered, you are indicating the data being submitted has been certified as complete.

For public schools, after making a change, the LEA will need to perform the additional step of certifying graduates using the “Certification of Graduates” function to re-certify.

Since an academic year begins on September 1 and ends on August 31, the graduation date will determine the initial award year. To ensure a student is eligible for a TOPS award when first enrolling as a first-time fulltime student, it is essential that the graduation date fall in the year preceding the year of enrollment.

Q-224. If the student graduates after attending summer school, what year would I report him as graduated?

- A. For TOPS scholarship purposes, an academic year is September 1 through August 31. If a student completes the summer school course in July 2012, and his school records show he graduates 7/2012, then, if otherwise eligible, the student could attend in Fall 2012 and must meet the TOPS application deadlines for TOPS payments for that semester. (See the answer to Question 19.) If a student completes his summer course work on September 1, 2012 and his graduation date is 9/2012, he may enroll for the fall semester of 2012 but he will not qualify to receive a TOPS award until the spring semester of 2012 because he will be considered a 2013 graduate.

Q-225. When submitting a batch file, can I submit a partial record for my seniors now and add their final grades when they finish their senior year?

- a. You can submit grades 9-11 for your seniors now. When you submit their senior year grades, you will send a complete transcript, including grades 9-12. When that happens, the previous information sent will be overwritten with the new batch file.

Q-226. How long will it take an error report to be available when submitting batch files?

- A. In STS On the Web, you will be allowed to include an e-mail address when submitting batch files. You will be notified by e-mail as soon as the report is ready with a link to the report.

Q-227. What if there is not a course code for our specific courses (for example: Bible, Bible Survey and Bible Study)?

- A. If a religion course is taken in addition to the Religion courses I-IV, use one of the General Elective Course Codes (General Electives 1-8). You must enter the name of the course in the Transcript Course Name field.

Q-228. Do technical schools have site codes? How are courses treated that are taken off-site at a hospital or a driving school or at a university for high school credit?

- A. Use the Sponsor Code and Site Code for the high school that is giving credit for the course for graduation. You may list the location the course was taken in the Transcript Course Site field.

Q-229. Is it necessary to enter information for foreign exchange students?

- A. If the student might attend a Louisiana university, the Board of Regents or the university would need that information. Therefore, the information only needs to be provided if the student might attend a Louisiana post-secondary school.

Q-230. There is a course code for Algebra I that is taken in the 6th, 7th or 8th grade. Is that the code that a school should use for a student that takes Algebra I for high school credit in 8th grade (or physical science, etc) or should they use the regular high school Algebra I code?

- A. If the school is going to give the student a high school Carnegie unit credit for a course taken in the elementary grades (6-8), use the high school subject course code rather than the elementary course code.

Q-231. If a student transfers to our school with a foreign language that is not offered and is not in Bulletin 741, nor does it have a course code, what should I use?

- A. Foreign language elective course codes have been created just for this purpose; however, there are rules that apply. If two of the elective codes are used, they must be for the same language; and the name of the language must be included in the Transcript Course Name field. The name in the Transcript Course Name field must be exactly the same for both courses. Failure to use the exact same name in the Transcript Course Name field will result in STS determining that the two years are in different languages. For example, if you are creating records for a student who has two units of Vietnamese, you will use: 124001 Foreign Language Elective – Year 1 with Transcript Course Name: Vietnamese and 124002 Foreign Language Elective – Year 2 with Transcript Course Name: Vietnamese.

Q-232. Can Speech Debate (2 units) or Speech III and Speech IV be used as substitutes for Fine Arts Survey?

- A. Speech III -0151103 and Speech IV -051104 (both units) are allowed for use by students graduating in 2007 and later as a substitute for one unit of Fine Arts Survey. Speech Debate cannot be a substitute for Fine Arts Survey for students graduating in 2009 and later.

Q 233. Can one unit of General Science substitute for Physical Science?

A. No. General Science cannot be used as a substitute for Physical Science.

Q-234. Can I print a transcript from STS?

A. You can print transcript data from STS (STSQ12 Report). However, you can print an official high school transcript from the On-Base Transcript System (OTS). OTS creates the official high school transcript based on data from STS.

Q-235. I am with a non-public school, how do I certify my data?

A. You are certifying the data when you enter a graduation date in a student’s record. Your certification is your confirmation that the student’s data is complete, correct and ready for a TOPS eligibility determination. **DO NOT** enter a graduation date in a student’s record before you are ready to certify that student’s data.

Nonpublic schools do not use the “Certify Students Function.” This function will be grayed-out for nonpublic schools.

Q-236. If a student fails a course at his home school and attends summer school at another school, which sponsor/site code would be used?

A. Use the sponsor/site code of the school where the course was taken.

Q-237. If a student transfers from an in-state eligible high school and has repeated a course during the summer prior to enrolling in the new school, which sponsor/site code should be used?

A. Use the sponsor/site code for the school attended for the course.

Q-238. Are there different course codes for honors courses?

A. No. An honors course is indicated by entering “HR” in the Course Type Code Field. Course types include:

RG – Regular	IB – International Baccalaureate
HR – Honors	SE – Special Education
GT – Gifted	TA – Talented
AP – Advanced Placement	DE – Dual Enrollment

Course Codes were created in 2005 for certain AP courses since they had no equivalent course code in Louisiana. See Supplement A for a list of AP Course Codes.

Q-239. Which course codes should I use for P.E.?

A. Non-Public High Schools should use the following course codes:

- 190101 Health and Physical Education I
- 190102 Health and Physical Education II
- 190103 Health and Physical Education III
- 190104 Health and Physical Education IV

These courses are not in the Program of Studies for public schools and do not meet graduation requirements. They may be taught at nonpublic schools only.

Students graduating from public schools in Louisiana are required to have 1½ units of Physical Education and ½ unit of Health. Physical Education III and IV may be taken as electives. The course codes for those courses are listed below.

190097 Adapted Physical Education 2
190098 Adapted Physical Education 3
190099 Adapted Physical Education 4
190100 Adapted Physical Education
190105 Physical Education I
190106 Physical Education II
190107 Physical Education III
190108 Physical Education IV
190500 Health Education

Q-240. When do I enter my freshmen and transfer students into STS?

- A. Freshmen and new transfer students cannot be entered into STS until the system has rolled over into a new academic year. For example 2011-2012 freshman should be entered into STS after the system rolls over into Beginning School Session Year (BSSY) 2011. This rollover will occur on October 1, 2011.

If a student transfers out of your school at the end of the 2011-2012 academic year, you must enter that student into STS for BSSY 2011. You will delete the student from your school when the system rolls over to BSSY 2011 on October 1, 2011.

Q-241. When must I have my STS data entry completed for the -2011-2012 academic year (BSSY 2011)?

- A. There are three deadlines for STS data entry:
February 11, 2012: Board of Regents Extract – for college admissions
June 10, 2012: TOPS and Board of Regents
September 9, 2012: Final deadline for academic year

Q-242. Can I change my data after I have certified my records?

- A. Yes. Student records may be changed after certification. Care must be taken by the school to recertify each time data is changed by a public school district.

Nonpublic schools are not required to certify their records; however, a graduation date must be entered for each student.

Q-243. I am a public school counselor. Can I have view access to STS?

- A. Yes. Each public high school is allowed to have inquiry access to the STS system. Contact the STS Coordinator for your district to request security access.

Q-244. I am a counselor in a non-public school that does online data entry into STS. Can our school have another user ID to do data entry?

- A. Yes, the school can have additional STS user IDs with online update access for data entry.

Q-245. I am a new counselor at a non-public high school. Can I use the previous counselor's STS user ID?

- A. No. You must request a new User ID through LOSFA. Also, the former counselor's User ID must be deleted. Contact a LOSFA Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626 Ext, 1012, or send an e-mail to custserv@osfa.la.gov for a STS Security Access Form.

Q-246. Where do I go for technical assistance for the STS program?

- A. For all non-public high school users and public school high school counselors with “inquiry” access, contact a Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012, or e-mail custserv@osfa.la.gov.

For nonpublic high school users with password issues, send an e-mail to helpdesk@osfa.la.gov.

Technical assistance for public LEAs is provided by the LDE.

Q-247. My STS User ID is revoked. How do I have it reset?

- A. Non-public STS users should send an e-mail to helpdesk@osfa.la.gov or call (800) 259-5626 Ext. 1012. Public high school counselors with Inquiry access should contact their parish STS Coordinator.

Q-248. Does submitting transcript data through STS replace a paper transcript?

- A. Yes. The OnBase Transcript System (OTS) will generate the official high school transcript from the data entered in STS. To obtain access for OTS, contact Sue Millican, LDE, at sue.millican@la.gov, (225) 342-9963, or (877)453-2721.

Q-249. Do colleges and universities have access to STS?

- A. Yes. Institutions can access student data after each of the Board of Regents Extract files are created in February, June and September. Public institutions should no longer ask high schools for a paper transcript.

Q-250. Once the data rolls over to a new academic year, will the grade placement field advance?

- A. No. The system does not assume that the student has advanced to the next grade. You must change the grade placement field for your students to show the correct grade level.

Q-251. Are there any major changes to STS data entry for 2011-2012?

- A. STS has added an edit that requires the **Passed GEE?** data element to be populated if a graduation date is entered for a student. **PUBLIC** schools **MUST** submit either a ‘**Y**’ (**Yes**) or ‘**E**’ (**Exempt**) for the Passed GEE Flag.

For students taking Dual Enrollment (DE) classes (classes taught by college teachers, for both college and high school credit), a new field has been added in which schools will enter the credit hours given by the college. This is for tracking purposes only and will not affect TOPS calculations. In addition to the new DE credit hours field, LEAs will be required to specify the post-secondary institution that agreed to give DE credit for the course. For DE courses, the post-secondary institution should be placed in the existing field “Course Sponsor Code” and the existing field “Course Site Code.” This can be an in-state or out-of-state post-secondary institution. This will be a new edit in both batch and online.

Since the fields for “Course Sponsor Code” and “Course Site Code” will now hold the post-secondary institution for “DE” type courses, STS has added a second new field to the end of the 030-transcript record in batch files, to hold the site code where the student was enrolled when he or she took the DE course.

Q-252. What courses may be designated as an AP course in STS?

- A. Only the courses identified by the College Board, using the College Board curriculum, can be labeled AP.

Each school having AP courses must have a designated AP Coordinator who is responsible for communicating with the College Board. For more information on AP Course Curricula see <http://apcentral.collegeboard.com>. For the Louisiana equivalent course titles and sponsor codes, see Supplement A. Only course codes listed in Supplement A are allowed to have a course type of AP.

Q-253. I have a student who does not have a social security number. What do I use as their Student ID?

- A. You can create a student ID for the student. The ID number will be 99-sponsor code- 4 sequential numbers. For example, 99-506-0001. See the Department of Education’s Bulletin 741 for guidance.

Q-254. Can I access STS at any time during the day or night?

- A. Yes. STS will be unavailable when being updated. See the LEADS Portal page for scheduled updates.

Q-255. How do I report a course that is being waived for a student in STS?

- A. If you are waiving a core course for a student, you will need to create a record for that class in STS. You should report the Letter Grade as “E” and Core Course Waiver as “Y”. The course must be entered as a full-year. STS will not accept part numbers for a course with a letter grade of “E.” You must create and maintain documentation supporting the waived class at your school for audit purposes.

STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN HIGH SCHOOL

Q-256. Does a student with a disability have to take all of the TOPS core curriculum units? If not, what documentation must they provide?

- A. TOPS core curriculum requirements may be waived for a student who has one or more learning, visual, hearing or physical disabilities. In order to obtain a waiver, the high school must certify to LOSFA that it has on file in the school records the following documents:
1. A written diagnosis from a person licensed or certified to diagnose the disability of the student that specifies the need for special accommodation by the student’s high school, and
 2. A written statement from the principal of the high school that a plan of accommodation under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (“504 Plan”) has been established, and the high school was unable to provide the special accommodation, or, if the special accommodation was provided by the high school, the failure to complete the specified TOPS core curriculum course was due solely to the student’s diagnosed disability.

Q-257. If the recommended accommodation is for the student not to take the course, and the 504 Plan reflects the school’s acceptance of the accommodation, is it acceptable for the principal to certify that the reason that the student did not complete the course was due solely to the student’s disability?

- A. Yes. If a student does not take a course under this circumstance, this is acceptable. If the student ignores the recommendation and attempts the course, and then drops the course due to the disability, the result would be the same.

Q-258. Is the high school required to report a course if a student is diagnosed with a disability, the high school provides special accommodations and the student earns a “D” or “C” in the course?

- A. Yes. A student with a disability cannot be granted a waiver for a course which was attempted and passed with a “C” or “D” in the course.

Q-259. We have a deaf student who is taking signing courses. Will these courses fulfill the foreign language requirement?

A. Yes, but only if the course is the BESE approved American Sign Language. See the answer to Question 88.

Q-260. Will LOSFA waive ACT/SAT scores for a child with ADD or ADHD or another disability?

A. No. The minimum ACT score is established by the TOPS statute and cannot be waived. However, the student may apply to ACT, Inc. for special testing conditions.

Q-261. Will LOSFA waive the TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average for a child with ADD?

No. The minimum TOPS Cumulative High School Grade Point Average is established in the TOPS statute and there is no provision for waiver.

Q-262. I have a student who qualifies for a disability waiver of a TOPS core curriculum course(s). How do I enter the disability information into STS to obtain the waiver for the student?

The data element letter grade code must be “E”, the core curriculum waiver flag must be “Y”, and the course part number must be blank. Records with “E” must be submitted as whole records.

STUDENTS WITH EXCEPTIONALITIES

Q-263. Does a student with an exceptionality have to take all of the TOPS core curriculum units? If not, what documentation must they provide?

A. TOPS core curriculum requirements may be waived for a student defined as an exceptional child in accordance with R.S. 17:1943(4), excluding gifted and talented. To obtain a waiver, the high school must certify to LOSFA that it has on file in the school records the following documents:

1. A written Individual Education Program (IEP) in accordance with R.S. 17:1941 et seq. and Louisiana Department of Education Bulletin 1706, and
2. A written statement from the principal of the high school that the failure to complete the specified core curriculum course was due solely to the student’s exceptionality.

Q-264. If the IEP is for the student not to take the course, is it acceptable for the principal to certify that the reason that the student did not complete the course was due solely to the student’s exceptionality?

A. Yes. If a student does not take a course under this circumstance, this is acceptable. If the student ignores the recommendation and attempts the course, and then drops the course due to the exceptionality, the result would be the same.

Q-265. Is the high school required to report a course if an exceptional student’s IEP provides special accommodations and the student earns a “D” or “C” in the course?

A. Yes. A student with an exceptionality cannot be granted a waiver for a course which was attempted and passed with a “C” or “D” in the course.

TOPS TECH AWARD

Q-266. How is the TOPS Tech Award different from the TOPS Award?

A. Besides the ACT score, most of the requirements are the same as, or similar to, the TOPS Award, except that there are three different core curriculums that may be used to qualify. The differences are noted in the answers to the following questions.

Q-267. What are the core curricula choices?

- A. There are two TOPS Tech curricula: Option 1 has a speech/language component (17.0 units). Option 2 has a career option component (19.0 units). In addition, you may complete the TOPS core curriculum for the TOPS Opportunity Award (17.5 units for 2011 through 2013 graduates and 19.0 units beginning with 2014 graduates). **NOTE:** To have a student considered for TOPS with the TOPS Tech Option 2 Core Curriculum, the student's **career major number** must be included in the Career Option field in STS.

Q-268. Can courses be mixed/matched for those courses listed under TOPS Tech Option 1, where foreign language is listed?

- A. Yes. The intent of the change in this requirement is to allow mixing/matching. For example, a student may meet the requirement by successfully completing Spanish I and French I, or Spanish I and Speech I, or another combination.

Q-269. In TOPS Tech Core Option 2, can keyboarding count to meet the requirements of “in a related field” for a student enrolled in a Welding Program?

- A. Only if it is a course included in the courses listed under the student's major.

Q-270. Where can I use a TOPS Tech Award?

- A. You can use the TOPS Tech Award to enroll in a nonacademic program for a vocational or technical education certificate or diploma at any eligible postsecondary institution that offers such courses. This includes the Louisiana Technical College campuses, some public colleges and universities and some of those colleges and universities that are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

Effective with the graduating class of 2009, you may also use your award at the following schools:

- 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 U.S. Department of Education, and
- Any proprietary school with a valid and current license issued by the Louisiana Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Q-271. What is a nonacademic program?

- A. A program of courses, as defined by the Board of Regents, designed to teach a skill or occupation or provide technical training resulting in a vocational or technical education certificate, diploma or a nonacademic 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.

Q-272. What is the academic year for nonacademic programs?

- A. The academic year for nonacademic programs is referred to as the “program year” because it is different than the academic year for academic programs. A program year is the schedule of semesters or terms during a year beginning with the fall semester or term, including the winter term, if applicable, and concluding with the spring semester or term or the equivalent schedule at an institution which operates on units other than semesters or terms. Enrollment in a summer term, semester or session is not required to maintain eligibility for an award, but the award will be paid for students who enroll on a full-time basis.

Q-273. Which schools offer nonacademic programs?

A. The eligible colleges and universities that currently offer nonacademic courses are:

- All campuses of the Louisiana Technical Colleges
- Baton Rouge Community College
- Bossier Parish Community College
- Delgado Community College
- Louisiana Delta Community College
- Louisiana State University at Eunice
- Northshore Technical Community College
- Nunez Community College
- Our Lady of the Lake College (non-public)
- River Parishes Community College
- South Louisiana Community College
- Southern University at Shreveport
- Fletcher Technical Community College
- SOWELA Technical Community College
- Cosmetology and Proprietary schools identified in the answer to Question 271.

Q-274. Can I use the TOPS Tech Award or the Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award to enroll in a nonacademic 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). Currently, Our Lady of the Lake College is the only LAICU institution offering a nonacademic program.

Effective with the graduating class of 2009, you may use the TOPS Tech award at the following schools:

- 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 U.S. Department of Education, and
- Any proprietary school with a valid and current license issued by the Louisiana Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

Q-275. Can I use a TOPS Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award to pursue a nonacademic program (attend a technical school)?

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

Q-276. How much does the TOPS Tech Award pay toward enrollment in a nonacademic program?

A. It depends on whether the college is public or private and whether it offers an academic degree at the baccalaureate level or higher:

- If it is a public college that DOES NOT offer a baccalaureate degree, the award pays the actual cost of tuition.
- If it is a public or nonpublic college that DOES offer a baccalaureate degree, the award is an average of what is paid to students enrolled in the same types of programs in the prior program year at eligible public colleges and universities that do not offer academic degrees at the baccalaureate level and is determined by dividing the total dollar value of awards made by the total number of students that received the awards.
- If you are attending a cosmetology school or proprietary school as described in the answers to Questions 270 and 272, the award will pay \$1,120 per year, or \$280.00 per quarter.

Q-277. How much do the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards pay toward enrollment in a nonacademic program?

- A. The TOPS award amount for these students:
- If you are enrolled in a public college that DOES NOT offer a baccalaureate degree, the award pays an amount equal to tuition.
 - If you are enrolled in a public or nonpublic college that DOES offer a baccalaureate degree, the award is an average of what is paid to students enrolled in the same types of programs in the prior program year at eligible public colleges and universities that do not offer academic degrees at the baccalaureate level and is determined by dividing the total dollar value of awards made by the total number of students that received the awards.
 - Students with TOPS Performance and Honors also receive their stipends.

Q-278. Will TOPS pay my award for a summer session in a nonacademic program?

- A. Yes. TOPS will pay for enrollment in summer session in nonacademic programs EXCEPT for the summer session immediately after high school graduation. For example, if you graduated in May 2012, you may enroll in a nonacademic program for the 2012 summer session, but your TOPS Tech Award will not be paid; however, your award will be paid for enrolling in a nonacademic program for the 2013 summer session.

Q-279. Will a TOPS Tech Award pay for two nonacademic diplomas?

- A. Yes. Beginning with the 2004-2005 Academic Year (College), you may use two full years of eligibility for nonacademic programs.

Q-280. Will a TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Award pay for two nonacademic diplomas (four years)?

- A. Yes. Beginning with the 2004-2005 Academic Year (College), the student may use all 8 semesters of eligibility for nonacademic programs.

Q-281. Will a TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Award pay for a nonacademic 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 immediately after the end of the nonacademic term, you may be eligible for continued TOPS payments if you have met continuing eligibility requirements and have not exhausted your TOPS eligibility.

Q-282. 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 spring semester if you are enrolled in a nonacademic program. This GPA is applicable to recipients of TOPS Opportunity Award. If you are a Performance or Honors recipient and you are enrolled in a nonacademic program, you must have a cumulative GPA of at least 3.00 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.

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

Q-283. How many hours does a TOPS Tech student have to earn to maintain his award?

- A. You must earn at least 24 hours each program year. If you have the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors awards and are enrolled in a nonacademic program, you must earn at least 24 hours each program year.

Q-284. If I am enrolled in a nonacademic program, can I use hours earned during a summer session to meet the 24 hour requirement?

- A. Yes. A student who has not earned at least 24 hours after the spring semester may use hours earned during the next summer session to meet the 24 hour requirement.

Q-285. If I enrolled in a nonacademic program and have not earned at least 24 hours after the spring semester, will TOPS pay for the summer session?

- A. Yes. See the answer to Question 285 for more information.

Q-286. If I have an Opportunity, Performance or Honors Award and have attended both an academic program and a nonacademic program, how is my GPA for TOPS continuing eligibility calculated?

- A. If you have attended both an academic program and a nonacademic program, you will have a GPA calculation for each type of program. Grades from an academic program **will not be mixed** with grades from a nonacademic program. The GPA for the program last attended will be used; however, if you change from one type of program to another while your award is suspended for failure to earn the required GPA, your award will continue to be suspended until you earn at least the minimum GPA required for the program you most recently attended.

For example, you are an Opportunity Award recipient who attended an academic program during the spring semester of 2011. At the end of the spring semester of 2011, your cumulative GPA is 2.25 on 25 earned hours. Your TOPS award will be suspended because you have earned more than 24 hours and your grade point average is below 2.30. If you enroll in a nonacademic program in the fall semester of 2011, your TOPS award will not pay for that semester because your award is suspended. If you earn at least a 2.5 at the end of the fall semester of 2011, your award will be reinstated for the spring semester of 2012, regardless of whether you enroll in an academic program of study or in a nonacademic program.

Q-287. What is the deadline for taking the ACT WorkKeys assessment?

- A. You must achieve a qualifying 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, 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. If your qualifying WorkKeys score is earned after the April deadline, but before July 1 your award will be reduced by one semester.

Q-288. 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.

SUPPLEMENT A
TO TOPS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS
BESE DESIGNATED ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES

College Board AP Course Title	Louisiana Equivalent Course Title	Course Code	AP Course Type: Required or Optional
Art History	AP Art History	030597	Required
Biology	Biology II	150302	Optional
Calculus AB	Calculus	160326	Optional
Calculus BC	AP Calculus BC	160394	Required
Chemistry	Chemistry II	150402	Optional
Computer Science A	AP Computer Science A	061175	Required
Computer Science AB	AP Computer Science AB	061176	Required
Economics: Macro	Economics	220201	Optional
Economics: Micro	AP Economics: Micro	220602	Required
English Language and Composition	English III	120333	Optional
English Literature and Composition	English IV	120334	Optional
Environmental Science	Environmental Science	150310	Optional
European History	European History	220410	Optional
French Language	French IV	121004	Optional
French Literature	French V	121005	Optional
German Language	German IV	121104	Optional
Government and Politics: Comparative	AP Government and Politics: Comparative	220604	Required
Government and Politics: United States	AP Government and Politics: Comparative	220503	Optional
Human Geography	World Geography	220300	Optional
Latin Literature	Latin V	121605	Optional
Latin: Vergil	Latin IV	121604	Optional
Music Theory	Music Theory II	030342	Optional
Physics B	Physics	150700	Optional
Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism	AP Physics C: Electricity and Magnetism	150794	Required
Physics C: Mechanics	AP Physics C: Mechanics	150795	Required
Psychology	Psychology	222001	Optional
Spanish Language	Spanish IV	122504	Optional
Spanish Literature	Spanish V	122505	Optional
Statistics	Probability and Statistics	160349	Optional
Studio Art: 2-D Design	Art IV	030504	Optional
Studio Art: 3-D Design	AP Studio Art 3-D Design	030508	Required
Studio Art: Drawing	Art III	030503	Optional
U.S. History	American History	220403	Optional
World History	World History	220401	Optional