

TOPS: Special Populations

Returning From an Out-of-State College; Applying as an Out-of-State College Student:

Question: If a student goes to college out-of-state the first year as a full-time student, can the student return to Louisiana and be awarded TOPS?

Answer: Yes. TOPS graduates of 2002 and thereafter, who enrolled for the first-time as a full-time student in an out-of-state postsecondary institution accredited by a regional accrediting organization recognized by the USDE and thereafter returns to Louisiana and enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible college or university, may be eligible for TOPS. The student must have met all the requirements for initial eligibility for a TOPS award and must have met the requirements to maintain the award while enrolled in the out-of-state college or university. If the student failed to maintain continuous or full-time enrollment or to earn at least 24 hours each academic year while out-of-state, he/she may apply for an exception to this requirement.

If the Application is not received by the July 1 deadline and/or the supporting documents, including the official final transcripts, are not received by the applicable deadline, the Application will be denied. There are no extensions or exceptions to these deadlines.

The student must enroll no later than the next semester or term, excluding summer sessions and intersessions, immediately following the last semester that he was enrolled in the out-of-state college or university, unless granted an exception for cause.

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

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: Are there any applications, forms or documents that I need to submit as a returning out-of-state college student?

Answer: Yes. You will need to supply the following information to LOSFA:

1. Submit a FAFSA, www.fafsa.ed.gov or, if the student can demonstrate that he or she does not qualify for federal grant aid (Pell Grant) and does 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 he enrolls in an eligible Louisiana institution; and
2. Submit TOPS Form TOPS0006 - 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 he enrolls in an eligible Louisiana institution with copies of the out-of-state transcript(s). The form is available on the LOSFA Website: <http://www.osfa.state.la.us/MainSitePDFs/TOPS0006.pdf>

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 attended out-of-state and include all hours attempted and/or earned. Submit all of your supporting documents with TOPS Application to Return from an Out-of-State College; however, if it is not possible to do so, submit all these supporting documents so that they are received no later than **January 15th** immediately following the July 1 deadline to submit the TOPS Application to Return from an Out-of-State College.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Students returning from active duty military service:

Question: I just completed my 4 year enlistment in the Army. Can I receive a TOPS award?

Answer: 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 following the fifth anniversary of high school graduation. To be eligible, the student 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 of separation from active duty. 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 enrollment requirement is available if the member submits a timely request for exception. If the military member re-enlists, this exception is not available.
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 United States 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 cancellation of your TOPS award.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: 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

Answer: Yes. The FAFSA deadline for a high school graduate who enters on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces within one year of graduation and before enrolling as a full-time college student is one year from the date the student is separated from active duty.

Note that a military member must enroll as a first-time, full-time student no later than the semester or term immediately following the five year anniversary of graduation from high school or within one year of the date of separation, whichever is earlier. If the military member's 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 the member submits a timely request for exception. If the military member re-enlists, this exception is not available.

For additional information, please consult the TOPS Q&A on the web at https://osfantweb.osfa.state.la.us/TOPS_Q_and_A.pdf.

Question: Is there an exception to the initial enrollment deadline for high school graduates who enter on active duty after graduation and before enrolling for the first-time as a full-time student?

Answer: Yes. The TOPS statute allows a high school graduate who enters on active duty with the U.S. Armed Forces within one year after graduation to delay first-time, full time enrollment to the semester (not including summer sessions) five years after the date of high school graduation or within one year of separation from active duty, whichever is earlier. If the military member's 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 the member submits a timely request for exception. If the military member re-enlists, this exception is not available.

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Citizenship, Permanent Residents:

Question: Are high school graduates that are not United States Citizens eligible for TOPS and what documentation must they provide for verification?

Answer: Students graduating in 2003 and thereafter must either be U.S. citizens or permanent residents as defined by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services.

Students who are permanent residents may provide one of the following:

1. A copy of the Permanent Resident Card - Form I-551, or
2. Application for Naturalization and/or Certificate of Naturalization, or

Students who have obtained United States citizenship may provide one of the following:

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

Students who believe they are permanent residents or citizens and who do not have one of the listed documents should contact LOSFA.

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