

2014-15

Bright Futures Student Handbook

Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements



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The Bright Futures Scholarship Program is governed by the following statutes and rule.

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Florida Statutes | s. 1009.53 – s. 1009.538 |
| State Board of Education Rule | 6A-20.028 |

These eligibility requirements are subject to change with each legislative session.

Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)

Students must **APPLY** for the scholarship by submitting the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) beginning December 1 of their senior year and by no later than August 31 after high school graduation. If a student does not apply for the scholarship by the deadline, a student **cannot** receive the scholarship! All eligibility requirements must be met by high school graduation but scores of ACT[®]/SAT[®]/P.E.R.T. tests taken through June 30 are accepted for evaluation purposes.

After submitting the FFAA, **the student is responsible for tracking application and award status online** and keeping the Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) informed of any demographic or institutional changes.

The Bright Futures Scholarship will renew automatically each year (up to the scholarship limit) if the student maintains the required GPA and earns the required credit hours. See Chapter 3: 'Renewing Your Award' for more details.

General Requirements

- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen, as determined by the student's postsecondary institution.
- Complete the Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) no later than August 31 after high school graduation.
- Earn a standard Florida high school diploma or its equivalent from a Florida public high school or a registered Florida Department of Education private high school.
- Not have been found guilty of, or pled nolo contendere to, a felony charge, unless the student has been granted clemency by the Governor and Cabinet sitting as the Executive Office of Clemency.
- Be accepted by, enroll in a degree or certificate program, and be funded at an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary institution within 2 years from the student's year of high school graduation.

(Please refer to the 'Deferment of Scholarship' section at the end of this chapter concerning students who enlist in the military after graduation.)

- Be enrolled for at least 6 non-remedial semester credit hours (or the equivalent in quarter or clock hours) per term.

Specific Requirements for the Scholarships

Florida Academic Scholars (FAS)

Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS)

Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the Florida Academic Scholars (FAS) award or the Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS) award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Graduate high school from a Florida public high school with a Florida Standard Diploma ([high school graduation requirements](#)), graduate from a registered Florida Department of Education private high school, earn a [GED](#), complete a [Home Education](#) program, or graduate from a non-Florida high school (OOS);
- Complete the required high school coursework;
- Achieve the required minimum high school grade point average (GPA);
- Achieve the required minimum score on either the ACT[®] or SAT[®] college entrance exam; and
- Complete the required number of service hours.

| Type | 16 High School Credits ¹ | High School Weighted GPA | College Entrance Exams (ACT [®] /SAT [®]) | Service Hours |
|------|---|--------------------------|--|---------------|
| FAS | 4 - English <i>(three must include substantial writing)</i> 4 - Mathematics <i>(at or above the Algebra I level)</i> 3 - Natural Science <i>(two must have substantial laboratory)</i> | 3.50 | 29/1290 | 100 hours |
| FMS | 3 - Social Science 2 - World Language <i>(sequential, in same language)</i> | 3.00 | 26/1170 ² | 75 hours |

¹ The required coursework aligns with the State University System admission requirements found in regulation [6.002](#).

² Home-educated students without official transcripts must score a 27/1220 to meet the FMS award requirement.

High School GPA

Evaluation for Bright Futures includes a weighted high school GPA (calculated to two decimal places) in the 16 college-preparatory credits. Courses identified as Advanced Placement (AP), Pre-International Baccalaureate (Pre-IB), International Baccalaureate (IB), Honors, Pre-Advanced International Certificate of Education (Pre-AICE), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) or academic Dual Enrollment are weighted in the calculation of the GPA. If necessary, students may use two additional credits from courses in the above academic areas, or from AP, IB, or AICE fine arts courses to raise their GPA.

College Entrance Exams

Bright Futures uses the best section score from any sitting of the same entrance exam to give the student the best possible overall composite score.

- OSFA does NOT use the writing section score from either test.
- ACT[®] scores of .5 or higher will be rounded up to the next whole number, while SAT[®] scores do not require rounding.
- The ACT[®]/SAT[®] exams may be taken through June 30 of the student's graduation year (or through January 31 for mid-year graduates).
- There is no limit to the number of times a student may retake the test through June 30 of the student's graduation year.
- Required test scores are higher for home-educated students who cannot produce an official transcript documenting coursework.
- Request test scores be sent to one of Florida's 12 state universities, Florida state colleges (public community colleges), or public high schools when the student registers for the ACT[®]/SAT[®] so that test scores will be sent to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) repository.

Service Hours

Documentation of service hours must be submitted to the high school or district. Students must complete service hours during high school and by high school graduation. These hours must be approved by:

- District school boards for public school students;
- Administrators of nonpublic schools for private school students; OR
- FDOE for students enrolled in a home education program. Districts certify these hours to the FDOE through an electronic process.

Other ways to qualify

Students who have demonstrated academic merit through a recognition program may be eligible for Bright Futures without having to meet one or more of the requirements. Please refer to the table below for how to qualify based on one of the merit recognition programs.

| Merit Recognition Program | College Entrance Exams (ACT®/SAT®) | Service Hours | Bright Futures Award |
|---|---------------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|
| National Merit® / National Achievement® Finalists and Scholars | | 100 hours | FAS |
| | | 75 hours | FMS |
| National Hispanic Scholars | | 100 hours | FAS |
| | | 75 hours | FMS |
| Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) - Diploma | | 100 hours | FAS |
| | | 75 hours | FMS |
| International Baccalaureate (IB) - Diploma | | 100 hours ¹ | FAS |
| AICE - Curriculum | 29/1290 | 100 hours | FAS |
| | 26/1170 | 75 hours | FMS |
| International Baccalaureate (IB) - Curriculum | 29/1290 | 100 hours ¹ | FAS |
| | 26/1170 | 75 hours ¹ | FMS |

¹ Students meet the service hour requirement through the IB curriculum.

AICE Curriculum

Complete a minimum of 12 AICE credits identified by the University of Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) in three academic areas as follows:

- Two credits from Group 1 – Mathematics and Sciences
- Two credits from Group 2 – Languages
- Two credits from Group 3 – Arts and Humanities
- Six additional credits in any combination from the above three Groups, or from Group 4 (Global Perspectives).

IB Curriculum

- Complete a minimum of 10 credits identified by the International Baccalaureate Organization (IBO):
 - Two credits each in three of the following areas and one credit each in the remaining three areas: Language Arts, World Language, Social Studies, Science, Mathematics and Arts/Electives. (Each of these credits must be an IB or AP course. Pre-IB courses do not meet IB curriculum requirements.)
 - One credit in Theory of Knowledge.
- Complete the Creativity, Action, Service (CAS) requirement.
- Complete an extended essay.

Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSV)

Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSV) award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Graduate from high school with a Standard Diploma ([high school graduation requirements](#));
- Achieve the required weighted minimum 3.0 GPA in the non-elective high school courses;
 - 16 core credits required to graduate from high school within four years
 - 14 core credits required to graduate from high school within three years (*excluding Fine/Practical Arts and Physical Education*)
- Take at least 3 full credits in a single Career and Technical Education program;
- Achieve the required minimum 3.5 unweighted GPA in the career education courses;
- Achieve the required minimum score on the ACT[®], SAT[®], or Florida Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (P.E.R.T.) exams (see table below); and
- Complete 30 service hours

College Entrance Exams

Exam types cannot be combined; a student must qualify based on each sub-test score for a single exam type. Sub-test scores from different test dates may be used to meet the test requirement. Scores taken through June 30 of the student's senior year (for a regular graduate, or January 31 for a mid-year graduate) will be accepted for Bright Futures evaluation. There is no limit to the number of times a student may retake the test, prior to June 30 of the student's graduation year.

Request test scores be sent to one of Florida's 12 state universities, Florida state colleges (public community colleges), or public high schools when the student registers for the ACT[®]/SAT[®] so that test scores will be sent to the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) repository.

| Exam Type | Sub-test | Required Score |
|------------------|------------------|----------------|
| ACT [®] | English | 17 |
| | Reading | 19 |
| | Math | 19 |
| SAT [®] | Critical Reading | 440 |
| | Math | 440 |
| P.E.R.T. | Reading | 106 |
| | Writing | 103 |
| | Math | 114 |

Service Hours

Students must complete service hours during high school and by high school graduation. These hours must be approved by:

- District school boards for public school students; or
- Administrators of nonpublic schools for private school students.

Non-Traditional Students

Home-Educated (HE) Students

All home-educated students must be **registered with the district** where they live for grades 11 and 12. In addition, students must meet the [general requirements](#) for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. If the student was not registered as home-educated with the district for grades 11 AND 12, but has the required transcripts and test scores, he/she may be able to apply as a Florida [GED Diploma](#) recipient.

Required Documentation

- **Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)** – Students must submit a completed FFAA online during the final year in a home education program (after December 1 of the last high school year and no later than August 31). After submitting the FFAA, **the student is responsible for [tracking application and award status online](#)** and keeping OSFA informed of any demographic or institutional changes.
- **Exam Scores (ACT[®]/SAT[®])** – Students may test through June 30 of the final year in a home education program (or through January 31 of the final year for a mid-year applicant). Submit scores in one of the following ways:
 - Request test scores be sent to one of Florida’s 12 state universities or Florida state colleges (public community colleges) when the student registers for the ACT[®]/SAT[®] so the scores will be sent to the FDOE repository.
 - Mail/Fax an official copy (no photocopies) of the test scores in the original sealed envelope to the attention of ‘Home Ed’ at the address at the end of this chapter.
- **Transcripts** – Submit (in any combination) an official transcript to the FDOE by the student’s Florida public high school, FDOE-registered private high school, Florida Virtual School, and/or dual enrollment coursework from a Florida state college or university. Parent-generated transcripts are not accepted.
- **Service Hours** – Documentation of service hours must be submitted to the district home education office where the student is registered as a home-educated student. The district will certify the hours to FDOE through an electronic process. Service hours must be performed during high school and completed by high school graduation.

The FDOE provides the following guidelines for students in a home education program:

- Service hours may not be hours that benefitted the student financially or materially, or be service to family members, defined as parents, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles, cousins, nieces, nephews, and spouses, including all step relations.
- The agencies where the service hours were earned must provide documentation on agency letterhead of the number of hours and dates of service completed.

Select [Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program and the Home-Educated Student](#) for a manual of home education guidelines.

General Educational Development (GED) Students

Documentation outlined below is required for the initial eligibility evaluation of students who earn a Florida high school equivalency diploma (commonly known as the Florida GED diploma) and wish to be evaluated for a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship.

To be determined eligible for the scholarship, GED students must meet the high school coursework and grade point average requirements before taking the GED exam. Eligibility for a scholarship will be determined in the academic year in which the GED is earned. For additional information on the GED, applicants may wish to visit DOE's [website](#) regarding the GED.

Required Documentation

- **Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)** – Students must submit a completed FFAA online during the final year prior to taking the GED (after December 1 of the last high school year and no later than August 31). After submitting the FFAA, **the student is responsible for tracking application and award status online** and keeping OSFA informed of any demographic or institutional changes.
- **Exam Scores (ACT[®]/SAT[®]/P.E.R.T.)** – Test scores taken through the end of June of the academic year in which the student takes the GED exam will be admissible. Submit scores in one of the following ways:
 - Request test scores be sent to one of Florida's 12 state universities or Florida state colleges (public community colleges) when the student registers for the ACT[®]/SAT[®] so that test scores will be sent to the FDOE repository.
 - Request a school counselor submit test scores on the high school transcript.
 - Mail/Fax an official copy (no photocopies) of the test scores in the original sealed envelope to the attention of 'GED' at the address at the end of this chapter.
- **Transcripts** – Submit (in any combination) an official transcript to the FDOE by the student's Florida public high school, FDOE-registered private high school, Florida Virtual School and/or dual enrollment coursework from a Florida state college or university. The required coursework must be completed and the minimum grade point average earned before the Florida GED exam is taken.
- **GED** – To qualify for an award, Florida GED diploma will be verified by the Florida Department of Education. Please follow the GED verification process outlined by the FDOE GED [website](#).
- **Service Hours** – Documentation of service hours must be submitted to the FDOE-OSFA. Service hours must be performed during high school and completed by the GED date. The hours must not have been service to family members. The agency or agencies where the service hours were earned must provide documentation of the number of hours and dates of completed service.

Mail or fax supporting documentation to the attention of 'GED' to the address at the end of this chapter.

Out-of-State (OOS) Students

Eligibility Criteria: A Bright Futures Scholarship requires a standard Florida high school diploma, unless the student earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida school while living with a parent or guardian who is on A) military or B) public service assignment away from Florida.

- A. Military assignment is defined as active duty in all branches of the Armed Services.
- B. Public service assignment is defined as the occupational assignment of a Florida resident employed by the United States Government or State of Florida, who as a condition of initial public service employment, is relocated from Florida to work outside the State of Florida.

A student whose parent or guardian is on public service assignment may reside with either natural parent or another adult designated by either natural parent or guardian.

| Qualifying U.S. Government Assignments | Qualifying State of Florida Assignments | Disqualifying Assignments |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> U.S. Department of State U.S. Department of Defense U.S. Embassy U.S. Department of Justice U.S. Department of Immigration Government officials assigned outside the State of Florida | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Florida Department of Transportation Governor’s Office of Tourism, Trade and Economic Development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Companies who contract with the U.S. or Florida governments. Red Cross Peace Corps Missionaries |

Program Requirements (no substitutions):

1. Meet the general requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.
2. Have one parent who is a Florida resident and is: A) serving active duty in the military or B) on public service assignment away from Florida (see above) during the student's last year of high school.
3. Submit a completed [Florida Financial Aid Application \(FFAA\)](#) online during the last year in high school (after December 1 of the last high school year and no later than August 31).
4. Submit official high school transcript(s) showing all high school coursework attempted. A student's transcript (including courses in progress for the final semester) and other documentation may be submitted to the FDOE after the first semester of the last year has been completed. If the student's award status can be improved by including additional information from the final term, the student's transcript may be resubmitted following graduation.

The 16 required credits for an FAS or FMS award must be approved by FDOE as college preparatory. Parental transcripts of home-educated students are not accepted.

5. Submit **ACT®/SAT® test scores**. Scores of tests taken through the end of June of the student's last year in high school will be admissible for a Bright Futures evaluation. Submit scores to FDOE in one of the following ways (preferably the first):
 - Request test scores be sent to one of Florida's 12 state universities or a Florida state college (public community colleges) when the student registers for the ACT®/SAT® so that test scores will be sent to the FDOE repository.
 - Submit test scores on the high school transcript.
 - Mail/Fax an official copy (no photocopies) of the test scores in the original sealed envelope to the attention of 'Out-of-State Applicant' at the address at the end of this chapter.
6. Submit documentation for OOS assignment.

Proof of Active Duty Military

- Copy of Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) from any month of the student's last year in high school, **AND**
- Copy of Military Orders to current location (if requested by OSFA)

Proof of Public Service Assignment

- If the parent is employed with the U.S. Government:
 - Copy of Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) from any month of the student's last year in high school, **AND**
 - Copy of letter of appointment relocating **from** Florida to the current location, (DD Form 1614, DD Form 1617, or a company human resource statement on company letterhead).
- If the parent is employed with the State of Florida:
 - Copy of State of Florida Employee Earnings Statement from any month of the student's last year in high school, **AND**
 - Copy of letter of appointment relocating **from** Florida to the current location, (DD Form 1614, DD Form 1617, or a company human resource statement on company letterhead).

7. Submit **Declaration of Florida Residency** and include a copy of **one of the four** documents below to indicate Florida residency (must be parental document):
 - State of Legal Residence Certificate (DD Form 2058 for military personnel, available from base personnel offices);
 - Enlistment/Reenlistment Document (DD Form 4/1 for military personnel, available from base personnel offices);
 - Florida driver's license or Florida voter's registration (current and at least one year old);
 - Proof of Florida property ownership with a homestead exemption.

Note: The student's **postsecondary institution will determine Florida residency** for funding purposes. If the institution determines the student is not a Florida resident, the student will not receive Bright Futures funding even though the student meets the initial academic eligibility criteria.

8. Submit **Proof of Dependency**, provided through a copy of a recent (less than 1 year old) parental tax return (cover sheet listing dependents only).
9. Submit **Documentation of service hours**. To qualify for an award, a student must complete service hours during high school and by high school graduation. The agency or agencies where the service hours were earned must provide documentation on agency letterhead of the number of hours and dates of service completed.

Please mail/fax the above documentation to the attention of 'Out-of-State Applicant' at the address at the end of this chapter.

Mid-Year Graduates

A mid-year graduate is a student who graduates between September 1 and January 31 of an academic year. The student must submit the *Florida Financial Aid Application* (FFAA) by August 31 **PRIOR TO** the intended graduation date. There are **NO EXCEPTIONS** to this application deadline. The **student must meet the scholarship requirements in effect for the academic year in which he/she graduates**. (Example: A December 2014 graduate must meet the 2014-15 scholarship eligibility requirements as well as the general program requirements as outlined earlier in this document.)

Service hours completed by high school graduation and test scores for test dates through January 31 will be considered in a mid-year graduate's Final Evaluation. A student's Final transcript evaluation **MUST** include a graduation date.

If determined eligible as a mid-year graduate, a student may receive funding for the spring term, if enrolled. *These students will be evaluated for renewal of their scholarships at the end of the next academic year of funding.*

If a student does not graduate mid-year as planned and wishes to apply as an end-of-year graduate, the student must submit a new FFAA after the new application opens on December 1.

Sending Electronic Transcripts

If your school is able to send secure electronic transcripts (or if your school contracts with a third-party transcript service), an official transcript may be emailed to: OSFA.Transcripts@fldoe.org.

We do not accept faxed, photocopied, or unofficial transcripts. Only official transcripts sent to the Department of Education via this secured method from the originating school or transcript service may be used in an official evaluation for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

NOTE: *Public high schools automatically send student transcripts to FDOE for BF evaluations.*

Notification of Eligibility

Early Evaluations (7th Semester) – Postings may begin in March

All students whose transcripts are submitted electronically to the FDOE for an official early evaluation (based on academic progress in the middle of the last year of high school and test scores for tests taken by January 31) will receive an eligibility or ineligibility determination, with the award status notification posted to their online account.

Students cannot lose an award based on early evaluation unless they fail to earn a standard Florida high school diploma from a Florida public or FDOE-registered private high school.

Final Evaluations (8th Semester) – Postings may begin in July

All students whose final transcripts are submitted (following the student's last term in high school) will receive an award status notification (eligibility or ineligibility determination) posted to their online account.

The Process

The award (or ineligibility) determination will be posted to a student's online Financial Aid Recipient History (FARH) screen and is viewable by the student. Login credentials will be sent to the student after the FFAA is submitted and enable a student to:

- view award status (eligibility determination);
- view/update demographic information;
- view/update postsecondary institution;
- view the amount disbursed each semester;
- view the spring renewal GPA;
- monitor hours remaining for the year and for the scholarship; and
- view all correspondence posted and/or sent from the FDOE.

Deferment of the Scholarship

Students who enlist in the military may defer the commencement of their scholarship. The 2-year eligibility period and 5-year renewal period will commence upon separation from active duty. Please see the *Reinstatement* section of Chapter 3 for more information.

Website Addresses

| | |
|--|---|
| Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA) | https://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAidsg.org/ua/sawstua_uaf orm.asp |
| Track Application and Award Status | https://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAidsg.org/home/ApplyHere.asp |
| High School Graduation Requirements | https://www.fldoe.org/bii/studentpro/grad-require.asp |
| State University System admission requirements found in regulation 6.002. | http://www.flbog.edu/documents_regulations/regulations/6%20002_finalversion.pdf |
| National Merit [®] / National Achievement [®] Finalists and Scholars | http://www.nationalmerit.org/ |
| National Hispanic Scholars | http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/psat/about/nhrp.html |
| Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) - Diploma | http://www.cie.org.uk/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-advanced/cambridge-aice-diploma/ |
| International Baccalaureate (IB) - Diploma | http://www.ibo.org/diploma/ |
| ACT [®] | http://www.actstudent.org/ |
| SAT [®] | https://sat.collegeboard.org/home |
| P.E.R.T. | http://www.fldoe.org/fcs/pert.asp |
| Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program and the Home-Educated Student | http://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org/SSFAD/bf/pdf/BFHomeEdManual.pdf |
| FDOE GED Website | https://ged.fldoe.org/default.asp |
| Declaration of Florida Residency | http://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAid.org/SSFAD/bf/pdf/decflores.pdf |

OSFA Mailing Address

Attn: **Home Ed** *or* **GED** *or* **Out-of-State Applicant**

Florida Department of Education
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1314
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

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