

2023-24

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, Florida Administrative Code

The eligibility requirements in this publication 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) no later than August 31 after high school graduation. The Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) strongly encourages students to complete the FFAA if eligibility requirements have not yet been satisfied or if a student chooses to attend an out-of-state postsecondary institution. 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; however, scores of ACT[®]/CLT[®]/SAT[®]/PERT tests taken through August 31 are accepted for evaluation purposes.

After submitting the FFAA, **the student is responsible for tracking their application and award status online**, keeping OSFA informed of any demographic or institutional changes, and ensuring that funding for an academic year is accurate by contacting their institution's financial aid office.

Once disbursed program funds, the Bright Futures Scholarship will renew automatically each year (up to the scholarship limit) if the student maintains renewal requirements. An annual FFAA is not required to be submitted to renew the Bright Futures Scholarship.

General Requirements

- Be a Florida resident and a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen, as determined by the student's postsecondary institution.
- Complete the 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 (FDOE) private high school; or complete a home education program.
- 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, and enroll in a degree or certificate program at, an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary institution.
- Be enrolled for at least six non-remedial semester credit hours (or the equivalent in quarter or clock hours) per term.
- If not funded in the academic year immediately following high school graduation, apply within five years of high school graduation to have your award reinstated.

(Please refer to 'Reinstatement Requirements' section of Chapter 3 for more information regarding the reinstatement process.)

(Please refer to the 'Deferment of the Scholarship' section at the end of this chapter concerning students who enlist in the military or engage in a full-time religious or service obligation after graduation.)

Specific Requirements for 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 standard Florida high school 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 if specific conditions are met (see the Out-of-State (OOS) guide referenced here for additional details – [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[®], CLT[®], or SAT[®] college entrance exam by August 31 of high school graduation year;
- Complete the required number of volunteer service, paid work hours, or the combination of 100 total hours; and
- Submit an FFAA no later than August 31 after high school graduation.

Type	16 High School Course Credits ¹	High School Weighted Bright Futures GPA	College Entrance Exams by High School Graduation Year (ACT [®] /CLT [®] /SAT [®])	Volunteer Service Only	Paid Work Hours Only	Combination of Volunteer/Paid 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	2023-24 Graduates: 29/96/1340 2024-25 Graduates: 29/96/1340	100 hours	100 hours	100 hours
FMS	3 - Social Science 2 - World Language <i>(sequential, in same language)</i>	3.00	2023-24 Graduates: 25/84/1210 2024-25 Graduates: 25/84/1210	75 hours	100 hours	100 hours

¹ The required coursework aligns with the State University System admission requirements found in Florida Board of Governor's Regulation 6.002. Additional information regarding high school coursework can be found within the [Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook](#).

High School Course Credits

For both FAS and FMS award types, the required coursework aligns with the State University System admission requirements. The world language requirement can be met by demonstrating proficiencies based on scores on [Credit-By-Exam Equivalencies](#) or other university approved means. Otherwise, the high school transcript must include a world language “completer” course to show that the world language requirement has been met. Please refer to the [Bright Futures Course Table](#) for specific information on which courses count toward FAS/FMS requirements.

High School GPA

Evaluation for Bright Futures includes an unrounded, weighted high school GPA (calculated to two decimal places) in the 16 college preparatory credits. The following courses are weighted 0.25 per semester course or 0.50 per year course in the calculation of the GPA: 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. For example, whereas an ‘A’ equals 4.00 quality points for an un-weighted course, an ‘A’ would equal 4.50 quality points for a weighted course. 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

Students must meet the scores set in statute for either the ACT[®], CLT[®], or SAT[®]

- The ACT[®] composite score is the average of the best section scores across the four subject area sections from any test sitting: [English](#), [Math](#), [Reading](#) and [Science](#). Composite scores ending in 0.50 will be rounded up to the next whole number.
- The SAT[®] combined score is the sum of the best [Reading](#) (Critical Reading or Evidence-Based Reading and Writing) and [Math](#) section scores from any test sitting of the SAT[®].
- The CLT[®] combined score is the sum of the best Verbal Reasoning, Grammar/Writing and Quantitative Reasoning from any test sitting of the CLT[®] for an Overall Score.
- The ACT[®], CLT[®], or SAT[®] exams may be taken an unlimited number of times through August 31 of the high school graduation year (or through January 31 for mid-year graduates).
- Students will be evaluated based on official test scores from the FDOE repository. To ensure OSFA obtains official test scores:
 - Ensure demographics on your test registration and high school transcript match; and
 - Request your official single sitting test scores be sent to one of Florida’s public colleges or state universities when registering for the ACT[®], CLT[®], or SAT[®].

Volunteer Service and Paid Work Hours

Students must complete a program of volunteer service or, beginning with a high school student graduating in the 2022-23 academic year and thereafter, paid work, as approved by the district school board, the administrators of a nonpublic school. Each district school board and the administrators of a nonpublic school must establish approved activities and the process for documentation of volunteer service or paid work hours including the deadline by which they must be completed. Students must earn either the required volunteer service, paid work hours, or the combination of 100 total hours.

The student may identify a social or civic issue or a professional area that interests them and develop a plan for their personal involvement in addressing the issue or learning about the area. The student must, through papers or other presentations, evaluate and reflect upon their volunteer service or paid work experience. Volunteer service or paid work may include, but is not limited to, a business or governmental internship, work for a nonprofit community service organization, or activities on behalf of a candidate for public office. The hours of volunteer service or paid work must be documented in writing, and the document must be signed by the student, the student’s parent or guardian, and a representative of the organization for which the student performed the volunteer service or paid work.

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. Note: Both AICE and IB Diplomas must be earned prior to high school graduation. Confirmations may come from AICE and IB as late as September. Please refer to the table below for how to qualify based on one of the merit recognition programs.

Merit Recognition Program	College Entrance Exams by High School Graduation Year		Volunteer Service*	Paid Work Hours*	Combination of Volunteer/ Paid Hours	Bright Futures Award
	2023-24	2024-25				
National Merit® Finalists and Scholars			100 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FAS
			75 hours			FMS
National Hispanic Recognition Program			100 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FAS
			75 hours			FMS
Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) - Diploma			100 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FAS
			75 hours			FMS
International Baccalaureate (IB) - Diploma			100 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FAS
			75 hours			FMS
AICE - Curriculum	29/96/1340	29/96/1340	100 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FAS
	25/84/1210	25/84/1210	75 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FMS
International Baccalaureate (IB) - Curriculum	29/96/1340	29/96/1340	100 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FAS
	25/84/1210	25/84/1210	75 hours	100 hours	100 hours	FMS

*Student must earn the required volunteer service, paid work hours, or a combination of both equal to 100 total hours.

National Merit Finalists and Scholars, or National Hispanic Recognition Program

- In order to identify National Merit Scholarship Corporation students, OSFA will need the official letter of recognition from National Merit Scholarship Corporation sent to High Schools.
- In order to identify National Hispanic Recognition Program students, OSFA will need the official letter (email) of recognition from College Board Recognition Program as well as the certification showing the student has been recognized by the National Hispanic Recognition Program as a scholar recipient. The documents should be uploaded to OSFA’s secure file by either the high school or the student.

AICE Curriculum

- Complete a minimum of 14 AICE credits* identified by the Cambridge Assessment International Education (Cambridge International) in the Diploma Core and three academic areas as follows:
 - AICE Diploma Core – AICE Global Perspectives & Research AS level (Two Credits required)
 - Group 1 – Mathematics and Sciences (Two Credits required)
 - Group 2 – Languages (Two Credits required)
 - Group 3 – Arts and Humanities (Two Credits required)
 - Group 4 – Interdisciplinary Skills (Optional – Four Credits maximum)
 - Six additional credits required in any combination from the above four groups.

*Students earn one credit by completing and passing one AICE full credit course and another credit for taking the corresponding AICE examination.

IB Curriculum

- Complete a minimum of 10 credits identified by the International Baccalaureate Organization:
 - 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)

The Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSV) award may be funded if a student is enrolled in a career education or certificate program. Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the GSV award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Achieve the required weighted minimum 3.0 GPA in the non-elective high school courses;
- 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 (PERT) exams (see table below); and
- Complete 30 volunteer service hours, 100 paid work hours, or the combination of 100 total 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. The ACT[®]/SAT[®]/PERT exams may be taken an unlimited number of times through August 31 of the student's graduation year (or through January 31 for mid-year graduates).

Students should request that test scores be sent to one of Florida's public colleges or state universities when they register for the ACT[®]/SAT[®] so that test scores will be sent to the FDOE repository. PERT scores are reported on student official high school transcript.

Exam Type	Sub-test	Required Score
ACT [®]	Reading	19
	English	17
	Mathematics	19
SAT [®]	Reading Test	24
	Writing and Language Test	25
	Math Test	24
PERT (Only applies to the GSV Scholarship)	Reading	106
	Writing	103
	Mathematics	114

Required test scores follow those established by [State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.0315, F.A.C.](#)

Volunteer Service and Paid Work Hours

Please refer to the **Volunteer Service and Paid Work Hours** section under FAS and FMS on [page 4](#).

Gold Seal CAPE Scholars (GSC)

The Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award (GSC) may be funded if a student is enrolled in a career education or certificate program. Upon completion of an associate in science degree program that articulates to a Bachelor of Science degree, a GSC Scholar may also receive an award for a maximum of 60 credit hours toward a Bachelor of Science degree program. Upon completion of an associate in applied science program, a GSC Scholar may also receive an award for a maximum of 60 credit hours toward a bachelor of applied science degree program.

Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the GSC award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Earn a minimum of five postsecondary credit hours through CAPE industry certifications that articulate for college credit; and
- Complete 30 volunteer service hours, 100 paid work hours, or the combination of 100 total hours.

Volunteer Service and Paid Work Hours

Please refer to the **Volunteer Service and Paid Work Hours** section under FAS and FMS on [page 4](#).

Non-Traditional Students

Students Participating in a Home Education (HE) Program

All students participating in a HE program must be **registered with the district** during the current and prior academic year. The district will certify a student's home education program registration status to FDOE through an electronic process. If the student was not registered with the district home education office during the current and prior academic year, but has the required transcripts and test scores, he/she may be able to apply as a Florida [GED Diploma](#) recipient.

Florida home-educated students must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Meet the [General Requirements](#) for a Bright Futures award;
- Submit a timely FFAA;
- Earn required minimum test scores; and
- Complete the minimum number of volunteer service, paid work hours or the combination of 100 total hours.

Required Documentation

- **FFAA** – Students must submit a completed FFAA online during the final year in a home education program (no later than August 31). After submitting the FFAA, **the student is responsible for tracking their application and award status online** and keeping OSFA informed of any demographic or institutional changes.
- **Exam Scores (ACT[®]/CLT[®]/SAT[®])** – Students may test through August 31 of the final year in a HE 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 public colleges or state universities when the student registers for the ACT[®]/CLT[®]/SAT[®] so the scores will be sent to the FDOE repository.
 - Mail 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.
- **Volunteer Service and Paid Work Hours** – Documentation of volunteer service or paid work hours must be submitted to the district home education office where the student is registered. The district will certify the hours to FDOE through an electronic process. Volunteer service or paid work hours must be performed during high school and completed by high school graduation. The FDOE provides the following guidelines for students in a HE program:
 - Volunteer service or paid work hours may include, but is not limited to, a business or governmental internship, work for a nonprofit community service organization, or activities on behalf of a candidate for public office.
 - The agencies where the volunteer service or paid work hours were earned must provide documentation on agency letterhead of the number of hours and dates of service or paid work completed.
- Home-educated students **do not** need to provide a student transcript. The test score and service hour requirements are the same as traditional students, which are provided in the table on [page 3](#).

General Educational Development (GED) Students

The 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 the FDOE's [website](#) regarding the GED.

Required Documentation

- **FFAA** – Students must submit a completed FFAA online during the final year prior to taking the GED (no later than August 31). After submitting a FFAA, **the student is responsible for tracking the application and award status online** and keeping OSFA informed of any demographic or institutional changes.
- **Exam Scores (ACT[®]/CLT[®]/SAT[®]/ PERT)** – Test scores taken through August 31 of the academic year in which the student takes the GED exam will be admissible. Please note: PERT scores are only applicable to GSV. Submit scores in one of the following ways:
 - Request test scores be sent to one of Florida's public colleges or state universities when the student registers for the ACT[®]/CLT[®]/SAT[®] so the scores will be sent to the FDOE repository.
 - Request a school counselor submit test scores on the high school transcript; or
 - Mail 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 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 no later than the Florida GED diploma date.
- **GED** – A Florida GED diploma will be verified by FDOE. Please follow the GED verification process outlined on the FDOE GED [website](#). The GED office will email the diploma verification directly to OSFA.Transcripts@fldoe.org.
- **Volunteer Service or Paid Work Hours** – Documentation of volunteer service or paid work hours must be submitted to FDOE, OSFA. Service hours must be performed during high school and completed no later than the GED diploma date. The agency or agencies where the volunteer service or paid work hours were earned must provide documentation of the number of hours and dates of completed service. Mail 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.

Program Requirements (no substitutions):

1. Meet the **General Requirements** for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.
2. Have at least 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 during the student's last year of high school.
3. Submit a completed **FFAA** online during the last year in high school (no later than August 31).
4. Submit official high school transcript(s).
5. Submit **ACT[®]/CLT[®]/SAT[®]** test scores.
6. Submit documentation for OOS assignment.
7. Submit Proof of Dependency.
8. Submit Documentation Volunteer Service OR Paid Work Hours.

Select **Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program and the Out-of-State Student** for a manual with further explanation of required documentation.

Mid-Year Graduates

A mid-year graduate is a student who graduates between September 1 and January 31 of an academic year **and** seeks funding for the spring academic term following graduation. Students who graduate early but do not seek funding until a subsequent academic year are not considered mid-year graduates for Bright Futures.

The student graduating early and seeking funding for the spring term must submit the FFAA by December 31 of the student's high school senior year. 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 2023 graduate must meet the 2023-24 scholarship eligibility requirements as well as the general program requirements as outlined earlier in this document.)

Volunteer service or paid work 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 October 1.

Sending Electronic Transcripts

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

OSFA does not accept unofficial or photocopied transcripts. Only official transcripts sent to FDOE via this secure 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 Bright Futures evaluations.

Notification of Eligibility

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

All students whose transcripts are submitted electronically to 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.

NOTE: Students awarded an IB or AICE Diploma will receive notifications of eligibility determination in early fall after a list of IB and AICE Diploma recipients has been received from these respective organizations.

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. The FARH shows the following information:

- Award status (eligibility determination);
- Demographic information;
- Postsecondary institution;
- Amount disbursed each semester;
- Spring renewal GPA;
- Hours remaining for the year and for the scholarship; and
- Correspondence posted and/or sent from FDOE.

Deferment of the Scholarship

Students who enlist in the military, or engage in a full-time religious or service obligation lasting at least 18 months may defer the commencement of their scholarship. The five-year renewal period will commence upon separation from active duty or the religious or service obligation. Please see the Reinstatement section of Chapter 3 for more information. The religious or service obligation provision is only valid for initial funding and does **NOT** allow a student extension of time if they have already received a disbursement.

Website Addresses

Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)	https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPHome/SAPHome
Track Application and Award Status	https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/SAPHome/SAPHome
High School Graduation Requirements	http://www.fldoe.org/academics/graduation-requirements/
State University System admission requirements found in regulation 6.002	https://www.flbog.edu/regulations/active-regulations/
National Merit® Finalists and Scholars	http://www.nationalmerit.org/
National Hispanic Recognition Program	https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/psat-nmsqt-psat-10/scholarships-and-recognition/national-hispanic-recognition-program
Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) - Diploma	http://www.cie.org.uk/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-advanced/cambridge-aice-diploma/
International Baccalaureate (IB) - Diploma	https://www.ibo.org/programmes/diploma-programme/
ACT®	https://www.act.org/
CLT®	https://www.cltexam.com
SAT®	https://sat.collegeboard.org/home
PERT	http://www.fldoe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/common-placement-testing.stml
Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program and the Out-of-State Student	https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/BFOOSGuide.pdf
FDOE GED Website	http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/hse
Industry Certifications	http://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/career-technical-edu-agreements/industry-certification.stml
Secure Upload of Documentations to OSFA	https://fldoe.sharefile.com/r-r8992dcdb99948c7a

OSFA Mailing Address

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

You may send documents via mail or electronically upload them to:

Florida Department of Education
Office of Student Financial Assistance
Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1344
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

[Click Here](#) to upload documents securely to OSFA.

