

Legislative Recap Webinar Q/A

HOPE for Advanced Degree

1. Can students who have a year of eligibility remaining begin a second bachelor's degree or do they have to use it to pursue an advanced degree?

A. The legislation does not allow for students to pursue a second bachelor's degree. Students must be in pursuit of an advanced degree.

2. Can a student who graduated in four (4) years in spring 2023 enroll in the fall 2023 semester in pursuit of a graduate degree and receive the HOPE Scholarship for the fifth and final year of eligibility?

A. No. The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2023, so the eligibility of any student who graduated prior to July 1, 2023, would be governed by the previous terminating events. There is no retroactive language included in the bill that would allow for payment toward an advanced degree for a student who graduated prior to July 1, 2023.

3a. If a student enrolls at an eligible, four-year institution having completed an associate degree while in high school, then completes the bachelor's degree in two (2) years, does that student then have three (3) additional years in which to pursue an advanced degree?

3b. Asked differently, if a student enrolls at an eligible, four-year institution having completed an associate degree in high school, this student has five years to receive the HOPE Scholarship. The student may pursue a bachelor's degree and advanced degree during this five (5) year timeframe, correct?

A. Effective July 1, 2023, the terminating events for the HOPE Scholarship will be completion of an advanced degree OR five years have passed since the date of initial enrollment, whichever occurs first. Both scenarios are correct in that a student would have the sum of five (5) years to complete a bachelor's degree and pursue an advanced degree, if applicable.

4. Is there any requirement that the advanced degree be related in any way to the bachelor's degree?

A. No, there is no requirement that the advanced degree be related in any way to the bachelor's degree.

5. When does the five (5) year "clock" begin for a Non-Traditional HOPE Scholarship recipient.

A. Terminating events for a Non-Traditional HOPE Scholarship recipient would apply. This means that it would be completion of an advanced degree OR five (5) years from the date of initial enrollment as a Non-Traditional HOPE Scholarship recipient.

6. If a student attends an out-of-state, regionally accredited institution, thereby not using the HOPE Scholarship, completes a bachelor's degree at the out-of-state institution, and enrolls at an eligible postsecondary institution in pursuit of an advanced degree, could this student then qualify for the HOPE Scholarship in pursuit of the advanced degree?

A. No, the legislation does not allow a student who graduated from an out-of-state institution to use the HOPE Scholarship in pursuit of an advanced degree.

7. Is a student required to maintain continuous enrollment following completion of the bachelor's degree to enrollment in the advanced degree?

A. Yes, continuous enrollment is required to maintain HOPE Scholarship eligibility. As a reminder, continuous enrollment is defined as the fall and spring semesters. This means that summer semester enrollment is optional. One important note here is that a December graduate who enrolls in a program which only starts in the fall semester would then need to appeal for the break in continuous enrollment. Assuming the student is enrolling in the advanced degree at the same institution from which the student graduated, the appeal would begin with the IRP; however, if enrolling at a different institution, the appeal would be sent directly to the TSAC Appeals Panel.

8. Does the HOPE for Advanced Degree legislation impact the way a student may pursue an advanced degree when he/she is not required to complete the bachelor's degree to enroll? The example given is the veterinary school at Lincoln Memorial which does not require a student to complete the bachelor's degree prior to enrollment.

A. The provision to allow this is already in place in Rule so this legislation has no impact.

9. Does the HOPE Advanced Degree allowance apply to students participating in the HOPE Scholarship for Non-Traditional students?

A. Yes, a student receiving the HOPE Scholarship for Non-Traditional students may participate while seeking an advanced degree, assuming all other eligibility requirements are met.

10. What is the enrollment threshold for a graduate student to determine an award amount?

A. Full-time enrollment will be determined based on your institutional policy. Three-quarter time and half-time enrollment will also be determined by your institution.

11. Would we use undergraduate and graduate studies coursework for the purposes of Lottery GPA calculation to determine continuing eligibility?

A. Yes, you would use both undergraduate and graduate coursework attempted after high school graduation.

12. Would HOPE Regains be treated in the same manner as currently treated?

A. Yes, there are no changes to policies governing HOPE regains.

13. Can a graduate student who was never previously awarded the HOPE Scholarship be awarded the HOPE Scholarship for Non-Traditional students while in pursuit of an advanced degree?

A. No. Statute requires a nontraditional student to enroll in a baccalaureate degree program at an eligible four-year postsecondary institution and attempt at least 12 hours to qualify for the HOPE award, unless the student earned an associate degree through Tennessee Reconnect. If a nontraditional student does not meet the GPA requirement after attempting 12 semester hours then he/she may receive the award if the minimum GPA is achieved at a future benchmark while still enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program.

14. Can a student who wasn't previously HOPE eligible who graduates in spring 2023, then becomes independent on the FAFSA, subsequently qualify for HOPE Scholarship for Non-Traditional students while in pursuit of an advanced degree?

A. No. The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2023, so the eligibility of any student who graduated prior to July 1, 2023, would be governed by the previous terminating events. There is no retroactive language included in the bill that would allow for payment toward an advanced degree for a student who graduated prior to July 1, 2023.

15. In certain graduate studies programs, students may be required to maintain a minimum 3.0 grade point average. How will this work with the HOPE Scholarship provisional rule?

A. The HOPE Scholarship provisional rule remains in place for students who reach the 72-hour benchmark and beyond and would not supersede an institutional rule that requires a student to maintain a higher minimum GPA to remain enrolled in an advanced degree program and subsequently graduate.

16. Can a student use the HOPE Scholarship while pursuing a graduate certificate?

A. Students can use the HOPE Scholarship while pursuing a graduate certificate if the certificate is embedded in an advanced degree program to which the student has been admitted. Also, pre-requisite

courses which are part of the advanced degree will be eligible for repayment if the student has been admitted to the advanced degree program. **Stand-alone undergraduate or graduate certificates will not be paid with HOPE Scholarship funds.**

Students may also enroll in a graduate certificate program, without receiving the HOPE Scholarship, to maintain continuous enrollment if the student's advanced degree program begins in a subsequent semester.

17. Can a student who completes their undergraduate degree but fails SAP due to maximum timeframe enroll in an advanced degree program and receive the HOPE Scholarship if they are no longer in violation of the max timeframe for SAP?

A. Yes, as long as all other eligibility requirements are met, the student will be eligible to receive the HOPE Scholarship while pursuing an advanced degree.

18. What is the definition of an advanced degree?

A. Advanced degree means a master's degree, a doctorate, or other degree conferred by an eligible postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified program of study at the graduate level.

19. A student is scheduled to graduate with a bachelor's degree in May 2023 but has an incomplete grade and is not allowed to graduate. The "I" grade is resolved in Summer 2023, and the student earns the bachelor's degree in August 2023. Is this student eligible to receive TELS for an advanced degree (ex: Master's level) for fall 2023 if (s)he has not reached the five (5) year terminating limit?

A. Since graduation requirements due to an "I" grade will not be achieved until August 2023 when the grade for the course is reported, the student may qualify for HOPE as an advanced degree student in the fall 2023 so long as the HOPE continuation requirements are met and the institution does not retroactively apply the student's graduation date to a date prior to July 1, 2023.

20. A student is scheduled to graduate with a bachelor's degree in December of 2023, but has an "I" grade and is not allowed to graduate. The student does not enroll Spring 2024 but resolves the "I" grade and graduates in May 2024. Can the student submit an appeal for LOA during Spring 2024? If so, and the appeal is approved based on resolving an "I" grade and the student enrolls in an advanced degree (Ex: Master's level) during Fall 2024, is this student eligible to receive TELS for an advanced degree (Ex: Master's level) for Fall 2024, if (s)he has not reached the five (5) year terminating limit?

A. Since the student in this scenario has not met a HOPE Scholarship terminating event, (s)he may seek an appeal request through the IRP for non-continuous enrollment in Spring 2024 based on documented medical or personal hardship reasons or due to extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control. If the IRP approves the student's appeal request, (s)he may qualify for HOPE in pursuit of an advanced degree in Fall 2024 so long as all other continuation requirements are met.

Dual Enrollment

20. Does HB957/SB1408 now clarify that a private institution may begin charging additional fees for the 1st through 5th dual enrollment courses, in addition to the DEG award students receive?

A. Yes, that is correct. This legislation provided clarification that a private college could charge above the cost of tuition and mandatory fees at the public two-year college. These additional charges could be additional fees associated with enrollment.

Tennessee Future Teacher Scholarship

21. Does the federal Teach Grant count as gift aid in the administration of the Tennessee Future Teaching Scholarship?

A. No, gift aid for the purposes of administering the Tennessee Future Teaching Scholarship will align with §49-4-708 which governs TN Promise and TN Reconnect. Gift aid will be the federal Pell Grant, the Tennessee Student Assistance Award, and the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship programs.

22. Does FSEOG count as gift aid in the administration of the Tennessee Future Teaching Scholarship?

A. No, gift aid for the purposes of administering the Tennessee Future Teaching Scholarship will align with §49-4-708 which governs TN Promise and TN Reconnect. Gift aid will be the federal Pell Grant, the Tennessee Student Assistance Award, and the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship programs.

Family Medicine Repayment Program

23. Is the Family Medicine Loan Repayment only for students seeking medical licensure?

A. Yes, the program is for physicians in residency training and is intended to incentivize them to provide medical health services in health resource shortage areas. There is no language to allow for nursing students or other medical professions to participate in the program. The program will be administered by the Department of Health. Here is a link to the bill signed by the governor:

<https://publications.tnsosfiles.com/acts/113/pub/pc0414.pdf>. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Olivia Spears at olivia.spears@tn.gov or (615) 557-6738.