

2020-21

# Bright Futures Student Handbook

Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements



# Chapter 1: Initial Eligibility Requirements

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

Florida Statutes	<a href="#">s. 1009.53 – s. 1009.538</a>
State Board of Education Rule	<a href="#">6A-20.028, Florida Administrative Code</a>

**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. 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<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup>/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. Students are responsible for ensuring that funding for an academic year is accurate by contacting their institution's financial aid office.

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: 'Renewal Eligibility' 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 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 ([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<sup>®</sup> or SAT<sup>®</sup> college entrance exam; and
- Complete the required number of service hours.

Type	16 High School Course Credits <sup>1</sup>	High School Weighted Bright Futures GPA	College Entrance Exams by High School Graduation Year (ACT <sup>®</sup> /SAT <sup>®</sup> )	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	2020-21 Graduates: 29/1330 2021-22 Graduates: 29/1330	100 hours
FMS	3 - Social Science 2 - World Language <i>(sequential, in same language)</i>	3.00	2020-21 Graduates: 25/1210 2021-22 Graduates: 25/1210	75 hours

<sup>1</sup> 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 scholarships, 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 .25 per semester course or .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 quality points for an un-weighted course, an ‘A’ would equal 4.5 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<sup>®</sup> or SAT<sup>®</sup> (see chart on page 3).

- The ACT<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup> 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<sup>®</sup>.
- The ACT<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup> exams may be taken an unlimited number of times through June 30 of the student’s 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 test scores be sent to one of Florida’s 12 state universities when registering for the ACT<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup>.

## Service Hours

Each district school board and the administrators of a nonpublic school must establish approved activities **and** the process for documentation of service hours including the deadline by which service hours must be completed. Service hours may include, but are 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. Except for credit earned through service-learning courses, the student may not receive remuneration or academic credit for the service work performed. The hours must be documented in writing, and signed by the student, the student's parent or guardian, and a representative of the organization. Additionally, the student must identify a social or civic issue or professional area, develop a plan for personal involvement in addressing the issue or learning about the area, and through papers or other presentations, evaluate and reflect upon the experience.

## 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 (ACT®/SAT®)		Service Hours	Bright Futures Award
	2020-21	2021-22		
National Merit® 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	FAS
			75 hours	FMS
AICE - Curriculum	29/1330	29/1330	100 hours	FAS
	25/1210	25/1210	75 hours	FMS
International Baccalaureate (IB) - Curriculum	29/1330	29/1330	100 hours	FAS
	25/1210	25/1210	75 hours	FMS

### 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<sup>®</sup>, SAT<sup>®</sup> 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 (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.

Students should request that test scores be sent to one of Florida's 12 state universities or public high schools when they register for the ACT<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup> so that test scores will be sent to the FDOE repository.

Exam Type	Sub-test	Required Score
ACT <sup>®</sup>	Reading	19
	English	17
	Mathematics	19
SAT <sup>®</sup>	Reading Test	24
	Writing and Language Test	25
	Math Test	24
P.E.R.T. (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](#).

### Service Hours

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

## Gold Seal CAPE Scholars (GSC)

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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 service hours.

### Service Hours

Students must complete service hours during high school and by high school graduation. For additional information, refer to **Service Hours** 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** for the current and prior academic year. If the student was not registered with the district home education office for 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 Bright Futures;
- Submit a timely FFAA;
- Earn required minimum test scores; and
- Complete the minimum number of service 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 application and award status online** and keeping OSFA informed of any demographic or institutional changes.
- **Exam Scores (ACT<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup>)** – Students may test through June 30 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 12 state universities when the student registers for the ACT<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup> 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.
- **Service Hours** – Documentation of service 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. Service 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:

- 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.

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

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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<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup>/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. Please note: P.E.R.T. scores are only applicable to GSV. Submit scores in one of the following ways:
  - Request test scores be sent to one of Florida's 12 state universities when the student registers for the ACT<sup>®</sup>/SAT<sup>®</sup> so that test 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 before the Florida GED exam is taken.
- **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](mailto:OSFA.Transcripts@fldoe.org).
- **Service Hours** – Documentation of service hours must be submitted to 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 supporting documentation to the attention of 'GED' to the address at the end of this chapter.

## Out-of-State (OOS) Students

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**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®/SAT®** test scores.
6. Submit documentation for OOS assignment.
7. Submit Proof of Dependency.
8. Submit Documentation of Service 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

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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 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 2019 graduate must meet the 2019-20 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 October 1.

## Sending Electronic Transcripts

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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](mailto:OSFA.Transcripts@fldoe.org).

We do 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

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### **Early Evaluations (7<sup>th</sup> 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 (8<sup>th</sup> 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

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

## OSFA Mailing Address

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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 1314  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400

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