



Bright Futures Scholarship Program

What is the Bright Futures Scholarship Program?

The Bright Futures Scholarship (BFS) Program is a primarily lottery-funded scholarship program created to reward Florida high school graduates who merit recognition for high academic achievement by providing them with scholarships to pursue postsecondary education at eligible public and independent postsecondary institutions in Florida.¹ The BFS Program consists of three scholarship awards: the Florida Academic Scholars Award, the Florida Medallion Scholars Award, and the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars Award.²

How does a student apply for a BFS Program award?

To be considered for any of the three BFS Program awards, a student must submit a completed *Initial Student Florida Financial Aid Application* during the last year in high school (after December 1 and prior to graduation). Completion of the application authorizes the Florida Department of Education (DOE) to evaluate the student's high school transcript and standardized test scores for eligibility for a BFS Program award and other state scholarships and grants. Failure to submit the application prior to high school graduation results in forfeiture of future eligibility for a BFS Program award.³ The application may be obtained online from the DOE's website.⁴

What are the general eligibility criteria for the BFS Program?

To be considered for a BFS Program award, a student must:

- ❖ Have resided in Florida for at least one year prior to receipt of the scholarship and must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen.
- ❖ Earn a standard Florida high school diploma or its equivalent.
- ❖ Be accepted by and enrolled in an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary education institution for at least six credit hours per semester or the equivalent in quarter hours or clock hours.
- ❖ Not have been found guilty of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to, a felony charge, unless the student has been granted clemency.
- ❖ Have completed an application for the program prior to high school graduation.⁵

¹ Section 1009.53(1), F.S.

² Sections 1009.53(2), 1009.534, 1009.535, and 1009.536, F.S.

³ Sections 1009.53(3) and 1009.531(1)(f) and (2), F.S.; Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2010-11 Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program Fact Sheet*, <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/factsheets/BF.htm> (last visited Aug. 20, 2010) [hereinafter *BFS Program Fact Sheet*].

⁴ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *Student Application Form*, https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/UA/SAWSTUA_uaform.asp (last visited Aug. 20, 2010).

⁵ Sections 1009.40(1) and 1009.531(1) and (2), F.S.; *BFS Program Fact Sheet*, *supra* note 3.

What are the specific eligibility criteria for the three BFS Program awards?

In addition to meeting the general eligibility criteria for the BFS Program, students must also satisfy the specific eligibility criteria described below for each of the three award programs. A student who satisfies all eligibility requirements for a BFS Program award must accept the initial award within three years following high school graduation or, if the student enlists in the U.S. Armed Forces immediately after completion of high school, within three years following the date of separation from active duty.⁶

Florida Academic Scholarship (FAS) Award

To be considered for the FAS Award, student must have:

- ❖ Received an International Baccalaureate (IB) or Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE) Diploma;
- ❖ Been recognized by the merit or achievement programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a scholar or finalist;
- ❖ Been recognized by the National Hispanic Recognition Program as a scholar recipient; or
- ❖ Attained certain SAT or ACT test scores and:
 - ◆ Achieved a 3.5 weighted grade point average (GPA) in the 16 high school credits designated by the State Board of Education as college-preparatory academic courses;
 - ◆ Attended a home education program⁷ in grades 11 and 12; or
 - ◆ Have completed the IB or AICE curriculum, but failed to earn an IB or AICE diploma.⁸

When SAT or ACT test scores are required for FAS eligibility, the minimum score that must be attained depends on the year of high school graduation, as set forth in the chart below:⁹

Minimum SAT and ACT Scores

High School Graduation Year	SAT	ACT
2010-11 and 2011-12	1270	28
2012-13	1280	28
2013-14 and thereafter	1290	29

Finally, FAS Award eligibility criteria require completion of a program of community service that requires the student to perform at least 75 hours of service work and to identify a social problem, develop a plan for his or her personal involvement in addressing the problem, and evaluate and reflect on his or her experience in a paper or other presentation.¹⁰

⁶ Section 1009.531(2), F.S.

⁷ The program must have been conducted in compliance with the requirements for home education set forth in s. 1002.41, F.S.

⁸ Section 1009.534(1), F.S.

⁹ Sections 1009.531(6)(a) and 1009.534(1)(a), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1009.534(1), F.S.

Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS) Award

To be considered for the FMS Award, a student must have:

- ❖ Been recognized by the merit or achievement programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a scholar or finalist or by the National Hispanic Recognition Program as a scholar recipient, but not have completed the community service requirement for a FAS Award; or
- ❖ Attained certain SAT or ACT test scores and:
 - ◆ Achieved a 3.0 weighted GPA in the 16 high school credits designated by the State Board of Education as college-preparatory academic courses;
 - ◆ Attended a home education program¹¹ in grades 11 and 12; or
 - ◆ Have completed the IB or AICE curriculum, but failed to earn an IB or AICE diploma.¹²

When SAT or ACT scores are required for FMS eligibility, the minimum score that must be attained depends on the year of high school graduation and the student’s academic background. As set forth in the chart below, a higher minimum score must be attained by home education students if their parents are unable to document a college-preparatory curriculum.¹³

Minimum SAT and ACT Scores

High School Graduation Year	Home Education Students - Undocumented Curriculum		Other Students	
	SAT	ACT	SAT	ACT
2010-11	1070	23	970	20
2011-12	1070	23	980	21
2012-13	1070	23	1020	22
2013-14 and thereafter	1100	24	1050	23

Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (FGS) Award

To be eligible for the FGS Award, a student must:

- ❖ Achieve a weighted 3.0 GPA in the: 16 core credits required for high school graduation with a traditional four-year diploma; 14 core credits required for a three-year career preparatory diploma; or 16 core credits required for a three-year college preparatory diploma.
- ❖ Achieve an unweighted 3.5 GPA in a minimum of 3 Career and Technical Education credits in one vocational program.
- ❖ Demonstrate readiness by earning at least the following scores on the College Placement Test (CPT), SAT, or ACT:
 - ◆ CPT – Reading 83, Sentence Skills 83, and Algebra 72;
 - ◆ SAT– Critical Reading 440 and Math 440; or

¹¹ The program must have been conducted in compliance with the requirements for home education set forth in s. 1002.41, F.S.

¹² Section 1009.535(1), F.S.

¹³ Sections 1009.531(6)(a) and 1009.535(1)(a), F.S.

- ◆ ACT– English 17, Reading 18, and Math 19.¹⁴

What are the high school course credits upon which the GPA calculation is based?

FAS and FMS Awards

The weighted 3.5 GPA requirement for the FAS Award and the weighted 3.0 GPA requirement for the FMS Award are based on the following 16 college-preparatory academic course credits:

- ❖ 4 English (3 credits with substantial writing)
- ❖ 4 Mathematics (Algebra I and above)
- ❖ 3 Natural Science (2 credits with a substantial lab component)
- ❖ 3 Social Science
- ❖ 2 Foreign Language (in the same language).¹⁵

A student may use up to two additional credits from courses in the academic areas listed above or Advanced Placement (AP), IB, or AICE fine arts courses to raise his or her GPA.¹⁶

If a student has received a General Equivalency Diploma (GED), he or she must have a 3.5 GPA for the FAS Award or 3.0 GPA for the FMS Award in the same college-preparatory academic course credits listed above.¹⁷

FGS Award

The FGS Award requires an unweighted 3.5 GPA in three Career and Technical Education credits. Additionally, the award requires a weighted 3.0 GPA in the core course credits required for a high school diploma. The required core courses vary depending on the type of high school diploma received by the student, as discussed below:

Traditional Four-Year Diploma: The weighted 3.0 GPA for a student who receives a traditional four-year diploma is based on the following 16 core course credits:

- ❖ 4 English
- ❖ 4 Mathematics (including Algebra I)
- ❖ 3 Natural Science (2 credits with a substantial lab component)
- ❖ 3 Social Studies (1 credit U.S. History, 1 credit World History, ½ credit U.S. Government, and ½ credit Economics)
- ❖ 1 Fine Arts or Practical Arts or .5 credit in each

¹⁴ Section 1009.536(1), F.S.; Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars Initial Eligibility Requirements for 2011 High School Graduates*, <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/gsvrequire.htm> (last visited Sept. 27, 2010) [hereinafter *FGS Initial Eligibility*].

¹⁵ Sections 1009.534(1)(a) and 1009.535(1)(a), F.S.; Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *Florida Academic Scholars Award Initial Eligibility Requirements for 2011 High School Graduates*, <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/fasrequire.htm> (last visited Sept. 27, 2010) [hereinafter *FAS Initial Eligibility*]; Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *Florida Medallion Scholars Award Initial Eligibility Requirements for 2011 High School Graduates*, <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/fmsrequire.htm> (last visited Sept. 27, 2010) [hereinafter *FMS Initial Eligibility*].

¹⁶ *FAS Initial Eligibility* and *FMS Initial Eligibility*, *supra* note 15.

¹⁷ *Id.*

- ❖ 1 Physical Education (including health).¹⁸

Three-Year Career Preparatory Diploma: The weighted 3.0 GPA for a student who receives a three-year career preparatory diploma is based on the following 14 core course credits:

- ❖ 4 English (3 credits with substantial writing)
- ❖ 4 Mathematics (including Algebra I)
- ❖ 3 Natural Science (2 credits with a substantial lab component)
- ❖ 3 Social Sciences (1 credit U.S. History, 1 credit World History, ½ credit U.S. Government, and ½ credit Economics).¹⁹

Three-Year College Preparatory Diploma: The weighted 3.0 GPA for a student who receives a three-year career preparatory diploma is based on the following 16 core course credits:

- ❖ 4 English (3 credits with substantial writing)
- ❖ 4 Mathematics (Algebra I and above)
- ❖ 3 Natural Science (2 credits with a substantial lab component)
- ❖ 3 Social Sciences (1 credit U.S. History, 1 credit World History, ½ credit U.S. Government, and ½ credit Economics)
- ❖ 2 Foreign Language (in the same language).²⁰

GED: If a student has received a GED, he or she must receive a weighted 3.0 GPA in the same core credits required for the high school graduation option selected by the student, i.e., the traditional four-year diploma, three-year career preparatory diploma, or three-year college preparatory diploma.²¹

How are courses weighted for the GPA calculation?

Current law requires that grades earned in certain courses be weighted for purposes of calculating the GPA that is used to determine eligibility for a BFS Program award. An additional weight determined by the DOE, which may not exceed 0.5 points per course, is given to the following:

- ❖ Courses identified in the course code directory as AP, pre-IB, IB, pre-AICE or AICE.
- ❖ Courses designated as academic dual enrollment courses in the statewide course numbering system.
- ❖ Other courses identified by the DOE as containing rigorous academic curriculum and performance standards.²²

What are the renewal criteria for a BFS Program award?

To renew a BFS Program award, a recipient must meet requirements for earning a specified number of semester credit hours per academic year and for maintaining a specified cumulative GPA in those courses.²³ Additionally, the student must have reimbursed or made arrangements to

¹⁸ Section 1009.536(1)(c), F.S.; *FGS Initial Eligibility*, *supra* note 14.

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ *Id.*

²² Section 1009.531(3), F.S.

²³ Section 1009.532(1)(a) and (b), F.S.

reimburse his or her postsecondary institution for any courses funded by a BFS Program award, which were dropped by the student or from which the student withdrew after the drop and add period.²⁴ The semester credit hour and GPA requirements are discussed below.

Semester Hour Requirements: For renewal, each award recipient must earn: at least 24 semester credit hours or the equivalent during the prior academic year if the student was enrolled full-time; or a prorated number of credit hours if the student was enrolled less than full-time. A student who fails to earn the minimum hours required and who was initially eligible for a BFS Program award:

- ❖ Prior to the 2010-2011 academic term will lose his or her eligibility for renewal for a period equivalent to one academic year. The student is eligible for a one-time restoration of the award in the following academic year if he or she subsequently earns the required semester credit hours and meets the GPA required for renewal.
- ❖ In the 2010-11 academic term or thereafter may only renew the award if the failure was the result of a verifiable illness or other documented emergency.²⁵

GPA Requirements: For renewal, a student who received a:

- ❖ FMS or FGS Award must maintain a 2.75 cumulative GPA.
- ❖ FAS Award must maintain a 3.0 cumulative GPA; however, a FAS Award recipient who has maintained a 2.75 to 2.99 GPA may renew as a FMS or FGS Award recipient.²⁶

A student who fails to maintain the required GPA and who was initially eligible for a BFS Program award prior to the 2010-11 academic term may restore eligibility once by improving his or her GPA to the required level. If initially eligible in the 2010-11 academic term or thereafter, the student may:

- ◆ Renew if the failure to maintain the required GPA was the result of a verifiable illness or other documented emergency; or
- ◆ Restore eligibility once by improving his or her GPA to the required level, but only if the inadequate GPA occurred during the student's first academic year.²⁷

What is the award amount?

For the 2010-11 academic year, the amount of a BFS Program award is calculated based the number of credit or clock hours taken multiplied by a fixed cost per credit or clock hour, which varies according to the type of scholarship received and institution attended, as set forth in the chart below:²⁸

²⁴ Section 1009.532(1)(c), F.S.

²⁵ Section 1009.532(1)(a) and (2), F.S.

²⁶ Sections 1009.532(1)(b)1., 1009.534(3), 1009.535(3), and 1009.536(3), F.S.

²⁷ Section 1009.532 (1)(b)2. and 3. and (2), F.S.

²⁸ Specific Appropriation 3, s. 2, ch. 2010-152, L.O.F.; Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2010-11 Award Amounts per Credit Hour – Florida Bright Futures Scholarships*, <http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org/SSFAD/bf/awardamt.htm> (last visited Sept. 27, 2010).

2010-11 Award Amounts			
	Semester Hour Award	Quarter Hour Award	Clock Hour Award
Florida Academic Scholars²⁹			
4-Year Institutions	\$ 125.00	\$ 83.33	--
2-Year Institutions, including Florida College System (FCS) Associate Degree Programs	\$ 77.00	\$ 51.33	\$ 2.57
FCS Baccalaureate Programs	\$ 86.00	--	--
Career/Technical Centers	\$ 63.00	\$ 42.00	\$ 2.10
Florida Medallion Scholars			
4-Year Institutions	\$ 94.00	\$ 62.67	--
2-Year Institutions	\$ 58.00	\$ 38.67	\$ 1.93
FCS Associate Degree Programs	\$ 77.00	--	--
FCS Baccalaureate Programs	\$ 64.00	--	--
Career/Technical Centers	\$ 47.00	\$ 31.33	\$1.57
Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars			
4-Year Institutions	\$94.00	\$ 62.67	--
2-Year Institutions, including FCS Associate Degree Programs	\$58.00	\$ 38.67	\$ 1.93
FCS Baccalaureate Programs	\$64.00	--	--
Career/Technical Centers	\$47.00	\$ 31.33	\$1.57

The maximum total BFS Program award that a student may receive for his or her postsecondary education depends on when the student was initially eligible for the award:

- ❖ If initially eligible prior to the 2010-11 academic year, the student may receive a maximum award for 110 percent of the number of:
 - ◆ Credit hours necessary to complete an associate or baccalaureate degree program; or
 - ◆ Credit or clock hours necessary to complete a career certificate program, up to 90 credit hours or the equivalent.
- ❖ If initially eligible in the 2010-11 academic year or thereafter, the student may receive an maximum award for 100 percent of the number of:
 - ◆ Credit hours necessary to complete an associate or baccalaureate degree program; or
 - ◆ Credit or clock hours necessary to complete a career certificate program, up to 90 credit hours or the equivalent.³⁰

²⁹ An additional stipend of \$53 per credit hour, \$35.33 per quarter hour, or \$1.77 per clock hour is awarded to the highest academic ranking FAS Award recipient in each district. *Id.*; s. 1009.534(4), F.S.

³⁰ Sections 1009.532(3) and 1009.536(4), F.S.

Do students have to repay the cost of courses funded by a BFS Program award which are dropped?

Yes. A student must reimburse the postsecondary institution for any courses funded by a BFS Program award which are dropped by the student or from which the student withdraws after the drop and add period, unless the institution grants the student an exception on the basis of a verifiable illness or other documented emergency.³¹ The postsecondary institution must refund to the DOE any BFS Program funds received by the institution for such courses within 30 days after the end of the semester, unless the student has been granted an exception.³²

May BFS Program awards be used for graduate studies?

Yes, but only FAS and FMS Awards under certain circumstances. Beginning with the 2010-11 academic year, a FAS or FMS Award recipient who graduates with a baccalaureate degree in seven semesters or fewer (or the equivalent in credit hours) may apply the unused portion of the student's award toward one semester of graduate study, not to exceed 15 semester credit hours, paid at the undergraduate rate.³³

Where may a student use a BFS Program award?

A BFS Program award may be used at any of the following postsecondary education institutions:

- ❖ An institution in the State University System or Florida College System.
- ❖ A Florida public career center.
- ❖ An independent Florida college or university that has operated in the state for at least three years and is accredited by an accrediting association that has standards comparable to the minimum standards required to operate an institution at that level in Florida.
- ❖ An independent Florida postsecondary education institution that is licensed by the Commission for Independent Education (CIE); is authorized to grant degrees; is fiscally sound; and has operated in the state for at least three years without having its approval, accreditation, or license placed on probation.
- ❖ A Florida independent postsecondary education institution that offers a nursing diploma approved by the Board of Nursing.
- ❖ An independent Florida postsecondary education institution that is licensed by the CIE; is authorized to award certificates, diplomas, or credentials other than degrees; has a program completion and placement rate that meets the minimum specified by law or the DOE; is fiscally sound; and either:
 - ◆ Is accredited at the institutional level by an accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. DOE and has operated in the state for at least three years during which time there has been no complaint for which probable cause has been found; or
 - ◆ Has operated in Florida for five years during which time there has been no complaint for which probable cause has been found.³⁴

A list of eligible institutions is available on DOE's website.³⁵

³¹ Sections 1009.53(11) and 1009.532(1)(c), F.S.

³² Section 1009.53(5)(a), F.S.

³³ Section 1009.5341, F.S.

³⁴ Section 1009.533, F.S.

How much funding has been provided for the BFS Program?

The 2009-10 GAA provided \$426,278,452 for the BFS Program.³⁶ During that year, a total of 177,612 students statewide received BFS Program awards with 53,520 students receiving initial awards and 124,092 students receiving renewal awards.³⁷ A breakdown of this data for each of the three BFS Program awards follows:

- ❖ **FAS Awards.** A total of 37,963 students received FAS Awards with 11,313 students receiving initial awards and 26,650 students receiving renewal awards. The average award amount was \$3,285.06.³⁸
- ❖ **FMS Awards.** A total of 137,189 students received FMS Awards with 40,783 students receiving initial awards and 96,406 students receiving renewal awards. The average award amount was \$2,147.41.³⁹
- ❖ **FGS Awards.** A total of 2,460 students received FGS Awards with 1,424 students receiving initial awards and 1,036 students receiving renewal awards. The average award amount was \$1,569.18.⁴⁰

The 2010-11 GAA provides \$437,282,546 for the BFS Program.⁴¹

Where may I obtain additional information?

Florida Department of Education

Office of Student Financial Assistance

(850) 410-5160

Student Hotline: (888) 827-2004 (toll free)

<http://www.floridastudentfinancialaid.org>

Florida House of Representatives

Education Committee

(850) 488-7451

<http://www.myfloridahouse.gov>

³⁵ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *2010-11 Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program Eligible Institutions*, https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/admin/SAWELIGPSI_ByProg.asp?ByProg=BF (last visited Sept. 27, 2010).

³⁶ Specific Appropriation 3, s. 2, ch. 2009-81, L.O.F.; s. 43, ch. 2010-152, L.O.F.

³⁷ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *End of Year Report 2009-10 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship* (Sept. 1, 2010), available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/EOY_Reports.asp?year=2009.

³⁸ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *End of Year Report 2009-10 – Florida Academic Scholarship* (Sept. 1, 2010), available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/EOY_Reports.asp?year=2009.

³⁹ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *End of Year Report 2009-10 – Florida Medallion Scholarship* (Sept. 1, 2010), available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/EOY_Reports.asp?year=2009.

⁴⁰ Florida Department of Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance, *End of Year Report 2009-10 – Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholarship* (Sept. 1, 2010), available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/EOY_Reports.asp?year=2009.

⁴¹ Specific Appropriations 3, s. 1, and 64A, s. 2, ch. 2010-152, L.O.F.; s. 3, ch. 2010-155, L.O.F.

