

South Carolina Need-Based Grant

What is the S.C. Need-Based Grant Program?

The financial aid office on each public college campus administers the Need-based Grant Program. The S.C. Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission administers the Need-based Grant Program for independent colleges and universities as a part of the Tuition Grants Program. A student may receive up to \$2,500 annually if enrolled full-time at a public institution and up to \$1,250 annually if enrolled part-time at a public institution. Students may receive up to two terms of the Need-based Grant in any combination of the fall, spring or summer terms. Half of the grant is awarded in the first semester and half is awarded in the second semester, assuming continued eligibility. The college at which the student is enrolled determines the exact amount, less any other gift aid received. The grant must be applied directly towards the cost-of-attendance at the college for a maximum of eight full-time equivalent terms. Students must be enrolled in their first one-year program, first associate's degree, first two-year program leading to a baccalaureate degree, first baccalaureate degree, or first professional degree.

The Purpose:

- Provide additional financial aid to South Carolina's neediest students.

General Eligibility Requirements:

In order to qualify for consideration for a South Carolina Need-based Grant, a student must meet **ALL** of the following minimum requirements each academic year:

- Be a needy student as defined by Title IV Federal Student Aid Programs for determining eligibility for federal student financial aid. The student must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form;
- Be a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident who meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under State residency statutes;
- Be a legal resident of South Carolina as defined in applicable State statutes governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes;
- Be enrolled at the time of the grant disbursement in a minimum of twelve credit hours if full-time or six credit hours if part-time for the term at an eligible public institution;
- Have not been convicted of any felonies or been convicted of any second or subsequent alcohol or drug-related misdemeanor offenses within the past academic year by submitting a signed affidavit to the financial aid office at the institution at which the student is enrolled;
- Does not owe a refund or repayment on a State Grant, Pell Grant, or a Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and not be in default on a loan under the Federal Perkins Loan or Federal Stafford Loan program; and
- Complete any other documentation required by the financial aid office at the institution at which the student is enrolled.

Frequently Asked Questions

How do I apply for a Need-based Grant?

The first step to apply for a Need-based Grant is to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form online at <http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/>. Applicants should complete the FAFSA as soon as possible after January 1st of each academic year. If the student plans to attend an independent college, the student should contact the S.C. Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission at (803) 896-1120. If the student plans to attend a public college, the student should contact the institution's financial aid office. These offices will advise the student of any additional steps that are necessary to be considered for a Need-based Grant.

Are there specific criteria I must meet in order to retain eligibility to participate in the program?

- Earn at least a cumulative 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale for graduation purposes by the end of each academic year and maintain satisfactory academic performance according to Title IV Regulations;
- For graduation purposes, earn at least 24 credit hours each regular academic year if awarded a Need-based Grant as a full-time student for two terms or earn at least twelve credit hours each regular academic year if awarded a Need-based Grant as a part-time student for two terms. If a student is awarded a Need-based Grant for one semester of the academic year as a part-time student and the other semester as a full-time student, the student must earn at least eighteen credit hours each regular academic year. If a student is awarded a Need-based Grant for only one semester of the academic year, the student must earn at least twelve credit hours each academic year if a full-time student or earn at least six credit hours each academic year if a part-time student; and
- Complete a FAFSA form and continue to meet all initial eligibility requirements annually.

Once a student completes a one-year program or an associate's degree or two-year program leading to a baccalaureate degree, is he or she still eligible for a Need-based Grant?

Students who have obtained a recognized credential in a program less than a baccalaureate degree are initially eligible to apply for a Need-based Grant upon enrollment in a higher level degree program, such as an associate's degree program, a two-year program leading to a baccalaureate degree, or a baccalaureate degree program. Students cannot receive Need-based Grant funding beyond the first baccalaureate degree or beyond eight full-time equivalent terms (whichever comes first).

Am I eligible to receive the Need-based Grant if I am taking remedial coursework?

Students enrolled in an eligible program of study may include remedial courses as part of the minimum number of required credit hours for part-time or full-time status, as long as such courses carry credit hours and meet Title IV limitations on remedial coursework.

Am I eligible for the Need-based Grant if I qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973?

Students who qualify under the ADA must register with the institution's Disability Services Office. The institutional Disability Services Provider must provide written documentation to the Office of Financial Aid each academic year verifying that the student is approved to be enrolled in less than part-time status or earn less than the required annual credit hours. In order to renew the grant each academic year, the student must complete the required number of hours approved by the institutional Disability Services Provider and earn a cumulative 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale for graduation purposes.

What happens if I want to transfer my Need-based Grant from one institution to another?

The Need-based Grant is not automatically transferable. Once you enroll at your new institution, you will be compared with all other students at that institution who have submitted the FAFSA for the current academic year. Based on those results, each Financial Aid Office will determine if you are eligible at their institution. If you are transferring mid-year, you should be aware that you may be placed on a waiting list since the Need-based Grant is awarded on a "first-come, first-serve" basis. To find out if you qualify for the Need-based Grant, you must check with the institution's financial aid office that you will be transferring.

I am a foster youth. Am I eligible for additional funding? If so, is there anything additional required of me?

For the current academic year, youth in the custody of the Department of Social Services (DSS) and attending a higher education in South Carolina are entitled to the maximum Need-based Grant of \$2,500 if the student self-identifies by June 1st. Students who have aged out of the DSS system and are living independently may qualify. In addition, youth are eligible for additional funding of up to \$2,000 above the \$2,500 maximum.

To be eligible to receive the maximum award and additional funding, foster youth must self-identify their foster care status to either the institution's Financial Aid Office, the Commission on Higher Education, or the Department of Social Services and must complete a Foster Care Waiver Form. The form must be submitted to the institution's Financial Aid Office, the Commission on

Higher Education, and to the Department of Social Services. The form can be downloaded from the Commission on Higher Education's website at www.che.sc.gov.

Where do I submit an appeal if I do not agree with the institution's decision to award me a Need-based Grant?

Students wishing to appeal any award decision must submit a written request to the institution's Director of Financial Aid. This request will be handled in accordance with the institution's financial aid appeal procedures. The institution's decision on appeals shall be final.

For more information about the Need-based Grant, contact:

Ms. Emily Wells
ewells@che.sc.gov
(803) 737-2262

Please note that the information provided is subject to change.