HOPE GED Grant Program

REGULATIONS – 400.

2012-2013 Award Year

Effective Date – July 1, 2012

Georgia Student Finance Commission
LOANS ◢ SCHOLARSHIPS ◢ GRANTS

2082 East Exchange Place
Tucker, Georgia 30084

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402. Program Overview.

The HOPE GED Grant Program provides recipients of General Education Development diplomas with a one-time award of $500 toward the cost of their postsecondary education. The purpose of the HOPE GED Grant Program is to encourage Georgia's GED recipients to pursue education beyond the high school level at a postsecondary institution located in Georgia.

An eligible student must be seeking a technical Certificate, technical Diploma, or Undergraduate Degree from a Technical College System of Georgia or University System of Georgia institution, or be seeking an Undergraduate Degree from an eligible private postsecondary institution located in Georgia.

The HOPE GED Grant Program was created beginning with the 1993-1994 Award Year (State Fiscal Year 1994). The program is fully funded by the Georgia Lottery for Education and administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission, in accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519 et. seq., in its entirety.

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403. Definitions.

"Academic Year" means a period of time, usually eight or nine months, during which a Full-Time student is expected to complete the equivalent of two semesters or three quarters of postsecondary coursework.

"Accel Program" or "Accel" means a student financial aid program administered by the Commission to assist students who are attending an Eligible High School and simultaneously taking Degree coursework from an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia as a Dual Credit Enrollment student.

"Administrative Review" means a review by Commission staff of an eligibility determination made by an Eligible Postsecondary Institution or by the Commission to determine if a HOPE GED program rule, policy, or regulation was applied correctly in a student's specific case.

"Associate Degree" means a two-year Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified Undergraduate program of study in an academic discipline or major. Associate Degrees typically require a student to earn at least 60 semester or 90 quarter credit hours.

"Audit" means the act of a student attending a course for personal development, with the understanding and agreement of his or her postsecondary institution that no credit hours or grade will be earned for the course.

"Award Year" means four consecutive quarters or three consecutive semesters, beginning with the summer term and ending with the spring term, or the Non-Standard Term equivalent, or Non-Term equivalent.

"Award Year Reconciliation" means the final student-by-student reconciliation for an Award Year conducted by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions with the Commission, immediately following the completion of an Award Year.

"Baccalaureate Degree" means a four-year Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified Undergraduate program of study in an academic discipline or major. Baccalaureate (Bachelor's) Degrees typically require a student to earn at least 120 semester or 180 quarter credit hours.

"Board of Regents" means the governing body of the University System of Georgia.

"Certificate" means an academic credential granted by a postsecondary institution indicating satisfactory completion of training by a student in an organized technical Undergraduate program of study which is not a Diploma program of study, an Associate Degree, Baccalaureate Degree, Graduate Degree

or Continuing Education. A Certificate program of study typically requires fewer credit hours than a Diploma program of study.

"Combined Paid-Hours" the total number of Paid-Hours a student has accumulated as a result of payment from any combination of the Zell Miller Scholarship Program, HOPE Scholarship Program, plus HOPE Grant Program, plus, through FY2011, the Accel Program.

"Commission" means the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the agency responsible for administering certain postsecondary educational student financial aid programs offered by the State of Georgia, and other programs for which funds may be appropriated or assigned to it by the state legislature, or from other sources, from time to time.

"Compliance Review" means an assessment by the Commission of an Eligible Postsecondary Institution by evaluating the Eligible Postsecondary Institution's compliance with the regulations governing programs administered by the Commission, in accordance with the Commission's *Compliance Review Process and Procedure* document.

"Continuing Education" means postsecondary courses designed for personal development, or an extension of the traditional on-campus learning process, and does not lead to credit toward a postsecondary Certificate, Diploma, or Degree.

"Cost of Attendance" means the estimated expenses, both direct and indirect, which may be incurred by a student and the student's family to finance the cost of receiving a postsecondary education. As determined by the student's postsecondary institution and as defined by Federal Title IV Regulations, these expenses may include Tuition, fees, room, meals, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses.

"Degree" means an Associate Degree or Baccalaureate Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified Undergraduate program of study in an academic discipline or major.

"Dependent Child" means an individual under the age of 24 who receives financial support from a Parent whose most recent federal or state income tax return lists the individual as a dependent.

"Diploma" means an academic credential granted by a postsecondary institution indicating satisfactory completion of training by a student in an organized technical Undergraduate program of study which is not a Certificate program of study, an Associate Degree, Baccalaureate Degree or Graduate Degree. A Diploma program of study typically requires more credit hours than a Certificate program of study.

"Distance Learning" means an educational process that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student. It may include courses offered principally through the use of television, audio, video cassettes/discs, correspondence, auto/computer conferencing, and transmission by computer, Internet, open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite.

"Dual Credit Enrollment" means an arrangement whereby a high school student is Enrolled in postsecondary coursework with a postsecondary institution and earning postsecondary credit hours while continuing to pursue a high school diploma, and the student's high school has agreed to accept the postsecondary coursework toward the student's high school graduation requirements.

"Eligible High School" means any private or public secondary educational institution located within the state of Georgia authorized to grant high school diplomas and is, accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Georgia Accrediting Commission, the Georgia Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Christian Schools International, the Georgia Private School Accreditation Council, or the Southern Association of Independent Schools. If the institution is not located in the State of Georgia, then it must be currently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or one of the following regional or state entities: New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Accreditation Commission, Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Alabama Independent School Association or the Southern Association of Independent Schools. Any high school not meeting the definition of an "Eligible High School" is considered to be an ineligible high school.

"Eligible Non-Citizen" means a person who, in accordance with the Federal Title IV Regulations, is a United States permanent resident with a Permanent Resident Card (I-551); or a conditional permanent resident (I-551C); or the holder of an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the Department of Homeland Security showing any one of the following designations: "Refugee", "Asylum Granted", "Parolee" (I-94 confirms paroled for a minimum of one year and status has not expired); or "Cuban-Haitian Entrant". Victims of human trafficking, in accordance with the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, may also be considered Eligible Non-Citizens. Persons with an F1 or F2 student visa, a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or a G series visa are not Eligible Non-Citizens.

"Eligible Postsecondary Institution" means an institution that is:

(1) a unit of the University System of Georgia; or
(2) a branch of the Technical College System of Georgia; or
(3) a private non-proprietary (non-profit) postsecondary institution located in Georgia that is eligible to participate in the Tuition Equalization Grant program, which is not a unit of the University System of Georgia, which is not

a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, which is not a four-year or Graduate level institution of higher education, that is, or is a part of, a college or university system that is owned and operated by a state other than Georgia, which is not a Graduate school or college of theology or divinity, and which is accredited or holds candidate status for accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or was previously accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools within the last seven years and which otherwise meets the requirements of this definition, except for the lack of accreditation by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools; or

(4) a private proprietary (for-profit) postsecondary institution located in Georgia that is eligible to participate in the Tuition Equalization Grant program, which is a Baccalaureate Degree granting postsecondary institution, which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, which is not a Bible school or college, which is not a Graduate school or college of theology or divinity, which admits as regular students only persons who have a high school diploma, a General Education Development (GED) diploma, or a Degree from an accredited postsecondary institution, whose students are eligible to participate in the Federal Pell Grant program, which has been reviewed and approved for operation and for receipt of Tuition Equalization Grant funds by the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission, and which is domiciled and incorporated in the State of Georgia, and which has been in existence in Georgia for at least ten years, and which met all these requirements by January 1, 2011. A proprietary institution which was an approved institution prior to January 1, 2011 will continue to be an eligible institution as long as it continues to meet all requirements which were in place prior to January 1, 2011.

"Enroll", "Enrolled" or "Enrollment" means a student has completed the registration requirements, as defined by the postsecondary institution, except for payment of Tuition and fees.

"Exception" means a formal action by the Board to waive a specific program regulation for a student.

"FAFSA" means Free Application for Federal Student Aid, the paper or electronic form provided and processed by the United States Department of Education and used by students to apply for Federal Title IV Programs, institutional aid, and some state aid programs.

"Federal Title IV Program(s)" means the student financial aid programs administered by the United States Department of Education that are authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

"Federal Title IV Regulations" means federal regulations governing Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Higher Education Amendments of 1998, found in Chapter Six of Title 34 of the Federal Register.

"Full-Time" means Enrollment for the equivalent of at least 12 semester or 12 quarter credit hours during a term at a postsecondary institution.

"GAcollege411" means the Commission's website that provides information on careers, Georgia's postsecondary institutions, student financial aid, and accesses electronic college and financial aid applications.

"GED" means General Education Development diploma awarded by the Technical College System of Georgia.

"Georgia Resident" or "Georgia Residency" means an individual or the status of such individual who is a United States citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen and meets the in-state Tuition requirements of the Board of Regents or the governing body of the TCSG Eligible Postsecondary Institution he or she attends, as specified and limited by these regulations, or for students attending private Eligible Postsecondary Institutions, meets the criteria of the *Georgia Residency Requirements for State Programs Regulations*, as specified and limited by these regulations.

"Graduate" means a postsecondary program of study beyond the Baccalaureate Degree.

"GSFAPPS" means the Georgia Student Financial Aid Application System, the Commission's web-based electronic application process by which students can apply for the scholarship and grant programs administered by the Commission.

"Half-Time" means Enrollment for the equivalent of at least 6 semester or 6 quarter credit hours, but not more than 11 semester or 11 quarter credit hours during a term at a postsecondary institution.

"HOPE" means Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally, a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides scholarship and grant assistance to Georgia Residents attending Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia. The components that comprise HOPE are the Zell Miller Scholarship Program, HOPE Scholarship Program, HOPE Grant Program, and HOPE GED Grant Program. HOPE is authorized by the O.C.G.A. § 20-3-519 et seq., funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *Zell Miller Scholarship Program Regulations*, *HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations*, *HOPE Grant Program Regulations, and HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations*.

"HOPE GED Grant Program" or "HOPE GED Grant" means a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides grant assistance to Georgia Residents who received GED diplomas, and are attending Eligible Postsecondary Institutions. The HOPE GED Grant Program is authorized by the O.C.G.A. § 20-

3-519 et seq., funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations*.

"HOPE Grant Program" or "HOPE Grant" means a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides grant assistance to Georgia Residents seeking technical Certificates or Diplomas from TCSG and USG Eligible Postsecondary Institutions. The HOPE Grant Program is authorized by the O.C.G.A. § 20-3-519 et seq., funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE Grant Program Regulations*.

"HOPE Scholar" means a student who graduated from an Eligible High School as a member of the 1993 High School Graduating Class, or any High School Graduating Class thereafter, meeting the academic requirements for the HOPE Scholarship.

"HOPE Scholarship Program" or "HOPE Scholarship" means a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides merit-based scholarship assistance to Georgia Residents seeking Degrees from Eligible Postsecondary Institutions. The HOPE Scholarship Program is authorized by the O.C.G.A. § 20-3-519 et seq., funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations*.

"Incarcerated" means to be confined by competent public authority or under due legal process. A student is considered Incarcerated if he or she is serving a criminal sentence in a federal, state, or local penitentiary, prison, jail, reformatory, work farm, half-way house, or similar correctional institution (whether operated by the government or a contractor) or is sentenced to home detention.

"Invoicing Deadline Date" means a date set by the Commission on which all invoices for HOPE must be submitted and approved for payment, including the resolution of any reject, for each term.

"Joint Enrollment" means an arrangement whereby a high school student is Enrolled in postsecondary coursework with an postsecondary institution while continuing to pursue a high school diploma, and the high school has not agreed to accept the postsecondary coursework as credit toward the student's high school graduation requirements.

"Learning Support" means remedial or developmental coursework required by the postsecondary institution or chosen by the student that does not count toward program requirements for the Diploma, Certificate or Degree the student is seeking and for which HOPE payment is sought.

"Matriculated" means a student is fully admitted and Enrolled at a postsecondary institution in a unified academic program of study leading to Degree, Diploma, or Certificate.

"Military Personnel" means an active member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Commissioned officers of the Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on active duty are also considered to be Military Personnel.

"Non-Standard Term" means a term where all coursework is expected to begin and end within a set period of time, but is not a semester, trimester, or quarter term. Non-Standard terms may be of unequal length within an Award Year.

"Non-Term" means a program of study measuring progress in clock hours, or a program of study measuring progress in credit hours and has courses that do not begin and end within a set period of time, or has courses that overlap, or has sequential courses that do not begin and end within a term.

"Parent" means the natural/biological mother or father, adoptive parent, or United States court-appointed legal guardian of a student.

"Satisfactory Academic Progress" means the academic standards required of students by their postsecondary institutions in order to be eligible to receive payment from Federal Title IV Programs, in accordance with Federal Title IV Regulations.

"Spouse" means an individual who is legally married to and recognized as the wife or husband of an active qualifying Military Personnel member.

"Study Away" means postsecondary credit-earning coursework approved by an Eligible Postsecondary Institution for its students in locations outside the State of Georgia, including locations in foreign countries.

"SURFER" means the Commission's web-based system used by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions to electronically transmit and receive student data, award information, and conduct other administrative activities related to the Commission's scholarship and grant programs.

"Technical College System of Georgia" or "TCSG" means the State of Georgia's unified system of public technical colleges, formerly known as the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), which is governed by the Board of Commissioners of the Technical College System of Georgia.

"Term-Reconciliation" means an official acknowledgement by an authorized official of an Eligible Postsecondary Institution, at the end of each term, that the number of students submitted for payment and amount invoiced by the institution, and the number of students awarded and amount issued by the Commission, according to the SURFER system, are accurate on the date of such acknowledgement.

"Tier" means the academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree as follows:

a. **"First-Tier"** means the first academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. A First-Tier student has accumulated less than 30 semester or 45 quarter Attempted-Hours.

b. **"Second-Tier"** means the second academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. A Second-Tier student has accumulated at least 30 semester or 45 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 60 semester or 90 quarter Attempted-Hours

c. **"Third-Tier"** means the third academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. A Third-Tier student has accumulated at least 60 semester or 90 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 90 semester or 135 quarter Attempted-Hours.

d. **"Fourth-Tier"** means the fourth academic level or classification of a postsecondary student who is seeking a Degree. A Fourth-Tier student has accumulated at least 90 semester or 135 quarter Attempted-Hours, but no more than 127 semester or 190 quarter Attempted-Hours.

"Transient" means temporary admission to a Host Institution for the purpose of completing coursework and earning postsecondary credit that the Home Institution has agreed to accept as transferable postsecondary credit.

"Tuition" means the charges to a student for postsecondary academic instruction without regard to other fees such as technology, activity, athletic, health, etc.

"Tuition Equalization Grant" or "TEG" means the State of Georgia student financial aid program administered by the Commission and funded by state appropriations to provide grant assistance for postsecondary study to Georgia Residents, in accordance with O.C.G.A. § 20-3-410 et seq.

"Undergraduate" means coursework that is included in a postsecondary program of study leading to an Associate Degree, Baccalaureate Degree, Certificate, or Diploma and is not included in a Graduate program of study.

"University System of Georgia" or "USG" means the State of Georgia's unified system of public colleges and universities, which is governed by the Board of Regents.

"Withdrawal Date" means the date the student withdraws, as determined by the institution in accordance with the procedures set forth for determining Withdrawal Date under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

404. General Eligibility Requirements.

404.1. Citizenship.

A student must be a United States citizen or an Eligible Non-Citizen for 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the school term for which the HOPE GED Grant is sought. Employees of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), their spouses, and their dependents are not exempt from this requirement.

404.2. Georgia Residency.

a. A student attending a TCSG or USG institution must meet the Georgia Residency requirements of the Board of Regents or the Technical College System of Georgia for 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the school term for which the HOPE GED Grant is sought.

    1. A student who received a GED who did not meet the Georgia Residency requirements of the Board of Regents or the Technical College System of Georgia on the date of successful GED test, must meet such Georgia Residency requirements for 24 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the school term for which the HOPE GED Grant is sought.

b. A student attending a private Eligible Postsecondary Institution must meet the requirements to be classified as a Georgia Resident, in accordance with the Commission's *Georgia Residency Requirements for State Programs Regulations, for* 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the school term for which funds are sought.

    1. A student who received a GED who did not meet the Georgia Residency requirements of the Commission's *Georgia Residency Requirements for State Programs Regulations* on the date successful GED test, must meet such Georgia Residency requirements for 24 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the school term for which the HOPE GED Grant is sought.

c. For purposes of HOPE eligibility, to be a resident on the date of successful GED test means to have established residency in Georgia, as determined by policies, but without regard to the length of time such student has established such residency.

d. Military Personnel stationed in Georgia on Active Duty or listing Georgia as his or her home of record, his or her Spouse, and his or her Dependent Child shall be treated as a Georgia Resident for purposes of HOPE GED Grant eligibility.

e. If the TCSG or USG institution grants a Military Personnel out-of-state tuition waiver, then such student meets the Georgia Residency requirements of the HOPE GED Grant. No out-of-state tuition waiver, other than for Military Personnel and their dependents, qualify students for HOPE GED Grant eligibility.

404.3. Enrollment Status.

A student is eligible for the HOPE GED Grant regardless of the number of credit hours for which he or she is Enrolled during a school term. Half-Time or Full-Time Enrollment is not a requirement.

404.4. Satisfactory Academic Progress.

A student is not required to be meeting the Eligible Postsecondary Institution's Satisfactory Academic Progress policy.

404.5. Selective Service Registration.

A student must be in compliance with the United States Selective Service System requirements, if such requirements are applicable, prior to the HOPE GED Grant application deadline (Refer to *Section 407.2*.) in order to be eligible for HOPE GED Grant payment for such school term.

404.6. Defaulted Loan or Refund Due.

A student must not be in default on a Federal Title IV or State of Georgia educational loan, nor owe a refund on a Federal Title IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program, nor in any other way be in violation of Federal Title IV Regulations or State of Georgia student financial aid program regulations. A student must meet the requirements of this section at the time funds are disbursed by the Commission on behalf of the student. If such student has repaid the defaulted loan or refund due in full, or resolve the default status, then he or she may be eligible to receive HOPE GED Grant funds beginning with the school term in which repayment was made in full, but not retroactively for previous school terms. A student's default status can be resolved one of four ways: 1) completing an acceptable rehabilitation plan, 2) having the loan repurchased by the original lender and the default status reversed, 3) by consolidating the loan out of a default status, or 4) by receiving an approved Title IV debt settlement, to include a compromised settlement.

404.7. Georgia Drug-Free Act.

A student convicted for committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs, is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant payment from the date of conviction to the completion of the following school

term, in accordance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990, O.C.G.A. § 20-1-24.

404.8. Incarceration.

A student attending an Eligible Postsecondary Institution is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant payment while Incarcerated.

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405. Program Specific Eligibility Requirements.

405.1. GED after June 30, 1993.

In order for a student to be eligible to receive HOPE GED Grant payment, such student must be the recipient of a GED that was granted by the Technical College System of Georgia after June 30, 1993.

405.2. Combined Paid-Hours Limit.

Receiving payment from the HOPE GED Grant Program does not impact the Combined Paid-Hours limit. Only the hours in which a student received payment from the Zell Miller Scholarship, HOPE Grant, HOPE Scholarship, or through FY2011, Accel Program are included in the Combined Paid-Hours limit.

405.3. Expiration of Eligibility.

a. After 24 consecutive months immediately following the date the GED diploma is awarded to the student, the GED voucher expires.

b. A student may receive payment after the expiration date, if the student was Enrolled in the next term prior to the voucher's expiration date.

405.4. Other Disqualifying Factors.

a. A student is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant payment if he or she began seeking a college Degree or received HOPE Scholarship payment prior to earning a GED diploma.

b. A student is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant payment if he or she received a high school diploma prior to earning a GED diploma.

c. A student is ineligible to receive payment from both the HOPE GED Grant and the HOPE Scholarship as a First-Tier student. A student who received a HOPE GED Grant payment, and later becomes eligible for the HOPE Scholarship as a First-Tier student, must repay the full amount of the $500 HOPE GED Grant award in order to receive HOPE Scholarship payment at the First-Tier.

405.5. In Combination with HOPE Grant.

A student, who meets all eligibility requirements of both the HOPE GED Grant and the HOPE Grant, is eligible to receive full payment from both programs for the same school term.

405.6. In Combination with HOPE Scholarship.

A student, who received HOPE GED Grant payment, and is later eligible to enter the HOPE Scholarship Program at a level beyond the First-Tier, is eligible to also receive the $500 HOPE GED Grant payment.

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406. Eligible Coursework.

406.1. Joint and Dual Credit Enrollment Coursework.

A student seeking a high school diploma who is simultaneously Enrolled at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution as a Joint Enrollment or Dual Credit Enrollment student is not eligible to receive HOPE GED Grant payment.

406.2. Learning Support Coursework.

A student, who Enrolls in Learning Support coursework, is eligible for HOPE GED Grant payment for the school term in which he or she is Enrolled in such coursework.

406.3. Exemption by Examination Coursework.

A student is ineligible to receive HOPE GED Grant payment for coursework that was exempted or given credit by examination, testing, training, or experience.

406.4. Distance Learning Coursework.

A student participating in Distance Learning coursework is eligible to receive HOPE GED Grant payment if all other eligibility requirements are met. The institution offering the Distance Learning coursework must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

406.5. Transient Coursework.

A student is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant payment as a Transient student.

406.6. Study Away Coursework.

A student is ineligible to receive HOPE GED Grant payment for Study Away coursework.

406.7. Continuing Education and Audit Coursework.

A student is ineligible to receive HOPE GED Grant payment for coursework classified by his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution as Continuing Education or Audit coursework.

406.8. Total Withdrawal from Coursework.

A student is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant payment for coursework from which he or she totally withdrew if, as a result, such coursework does not appear on the

student's academic transcript as a "Withdrawal" or any other similar identification. (Refer to *Section 410.1*.)

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407. Student Application Requirements.

NEW

Beginning with the 2013-2014 Award Year, a student must complete a current year FAFSA to receive HOPE GED Grant funding. The GSFAPPS electronic application and the paper HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application will no longer be valid applications.

407.1. Application Forms.

a. In order to be considered for a HOPE GED Grant, a student must complete one of the following application forms.

1. A GSFAPPS electronic application;

2. A paper HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application, (printable from the GAcollege411 website), or

3. A current year FAFSA.

b. In addition to one of these three applications, an Eligible Postsecondary Institution may require students to complete the institution's application for student financial aid or other forms to provide supplemental information for the purpose of determining HOPE GED Grant eligibility.

c. Once a student has submitted a GSFAPPS or paper HOPE Scholarship and Grant Application, and it has been accepted on the Commission's system as a valid application, it will remain on the Commission's system as a valid application for 84 consecutive months following the application's approval date. The student's application will remain valid during the 84 month period, regardless of whether or not an institution submits a HOPE invoice to the Commission on behalf of the student during the 84 month period. Upon conclusion of the 84 month period, the student's application will expire. Once an application has expired, the student will be required to submit a new application in order for a HOPE invoice to be processed for the student by the Commission. If during the original application's 84 month period, the student submits to the Commission a new application for HOPE, or an application for a program other than HOPE, both applications will remain valid for 84 consecutive months following the most recent application's approval date. The above stipulations of *Section 407.1.c.* apply to all GSFAPPS and paper HOPE Scholarship and Grant Applications accepted as valid applications on the Commission's system, including such applications that were submitted and accepted prior to the 2008-2009 Award Year.

407.2. Application Deadline Date.

A student must file a GSFAPPS, FAFSA, or paper HOPE Scholarship and Grant on or before the last day of the school term (semester or quarter) or the student's withdrawal date, whichever occurs first, in order to be paid for that school term. The last day of the school term is the last day of classes or exams for the institution, whichever occurs later. Supplemental documentation required by the institution or the Commission to support or verify a student's application information may be submitted after the deadline without jeopardizing the student's eligibility.

407.3. Application for Subsequent Years.

The HOPE GED Grant is non-renewable.

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408. Award Requirements.

408.1. Award Amount.

a. The amount of a HOPE GED Grant payment is a one-time, non-renewable award of $500.

b. A student's HOPE GED Grant funds may be applied to any of his or her Cost of Attendance charges. If a student's Cost of Attendance budget cannot absorb the full $500 award, the remaining HOPE GED Grant funds for the recipient may be carried forward to the following school term.

408.2. Awards Per School Term.

The HOPE GED Grant is available to students for the standard school terms of Summer, Fall, and Spring semesters or Summer, Fall, Winter, and Spring quarters. An institution may combine mini-terms or modules to form the equivalent of a standard semester or quarter. An institution may offer Non-Standard Terms or Non-Terms, in which courses or modules are taken consecutively to form the equivalent of a standard semester or quarter.

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409. Invoicing Requirements.

409.1. Submission of Invoices.

a. Eligible Postsecondary Institutions may submit HOPE GED Grant invoices to the Commission as early as 15 calendar days prior to the first day of classes for the school term.

b. Invoices must be submitted, processed and approved by the Commission by the Invoicing Deadline Date as established by the Commission. In the event invoices are submitted to the Commission by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions after the Invoicing Deadline Date for a school term, the Commission may issue a notice of failure to meet the Invoicing Deadline Date to the President and/or governing body of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution and the invoices may not be honored.

c. Prior to the beginning of any award year and no later than June 30 of each year the Commission shall establish and publish the Invoicing Deadline Date for each school term for the upcoming Award Year.

d. An Invoice may be honored or paid after the Invoicing Deadline Date if the failure to meet the date was due to the need for supplemental documentation required by the institution or the Commission to support or verify a student's eligibility, or late grades, late completions, grade changes or other adjustments made to the student's official academic transcript that resulted in a change in eligibility and the student met all other eligibility requirements prior to the deadline.

e. The President of GSFC has sole discretion in the determination of deadline extensions.

409.2. Payment of Invoices.

HOPE GED Grant funds are paid to Eligible Postsecondary Institutions by check or electronic transfer of funds on behalf of eligible students each school term upon submission to the Commission of a HOPE GED Grant invoice.

409.3. Cost of Attendance.

Upon receipt of HOPE GED Grant payment for a student from the Commission, the institution must credit the amount of payment on behalf of an eligible student to the student's account and it may be applied to any of his or her Cost of Attendance charges. HOPE GED Grant funds for a recipient may be carried forward to the following school term, if the student's Cost of Attendance budget cannot absorb the full $500 award. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution should

only invoice the Commission for the exact amount the student is eligible to receive for the school term.

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410. Refund Requirements.

410.1. Calculation of Refunds.

a. If the student officially withdraws, drops out, drops hours, is expelled, or otherwise fails to complete a period of Enrollment, and is entitled to a refund, a portion of such refund may need to be returned to the HOPE GED Grant fund. A student is ineligible for HOPE GED Grant funds for coursework from which he or she totally withdrew if, as a result, such coursework does not appear on the student's academic transcript as a "Withdrawal", or any other code or identification for such a withdrawal. If the institution invoiced the Commission prior to the student's total withdrawal, then the institution must cancel the student's HOPE GED Grant award for that term, through the SURFER system.

b. If applicable, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must first apply the Federal Title IV Return of Funds policy for any federal aid the student may have received. To determine the refund to HOPE GED Grant, the institution must then apply the institution's refund policy, which may or may not be identical to the Federal Title IV Return of Funds policy, to the student's HOPE GED Grant award amount.

    1. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must determine the amount of the refund due back to the HOPE program. The amount of the HOPE GED Grant award not determined to be owed back to the HOPE GED Grant program is retained by the institution to cover the institutions' cost for the portion of the school term that the student was enrolled.

    2. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must adjust the student's invoice in SURFER to the new award amount remaining after the refund is calculated within 45 days of the determination.

    3. If the Eligible Postsecondary Institution has sufficient funds on hand to return to the Commission the refund owed to the HOPE GED Grant program, it should return the funds within 45 days of the refund determination. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution would then collect the refund amount from the student. However, the student should not be reported with a "Refund Due" status to the Commission since the funds have been repaid to the Commission.

    4. If the Eligible Postsecondary Institution does not have sufficient funds on hand to return to the Commission the refund owed to the HOPE GED Grant program, the student is considered to have a "Refund Due" to the Commission and the institution must report the student to the Commission with a "Refund Due" status.

410.2. Collection of Refunds.

A student who owes a refund to the Commission should pay the Eligible Postsecondary Institution and the Eligible Postsecondary Institution should pay the Commission or, at its sole discretion, the Commission may require the student to pay the refund directly to the Commission. Nothing herein shall be deemed to prohibit the Commission or the Eligible Postsecondary Institution from using all available legal and equitable remedies to collect the refund, including, but not limited to, garnishment of pay, loss of professional license, loss of lottery winnings and offset of state tax refund.

410.3. Emergency Military Duty.

A student who is a member of the United States Armed Services, National Guard, or Armed Forces Reserve receiving funds from the HOPE GED Grant Program who is called to emergency military duty during a school term that is already in progress should not have his or her HOPE GED Grant eligibility negatively impacted. If the Eligible Postsecondary Institution the student attends allows the student to totally withdraw and receive a grade such as "WM" for "military withdrawal" or the institution totally removes all grades for that term and corresponding credit hours from the student's records, the institution should return the full amount of the HOPE GED Grant award to the HOPE account. This will allow the student to receive the full benefit of his or her HOPE GED Grant award, upon returning from service and Enrolling once again at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution. This regulation may also be applied to students who are not members of the military but are otherwise unusually and detrimentally affected by the emergency activation of members of the military, as determined by the President of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution that such student is attending.

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411. Reconciliation Requirements.

411.1. Term-Reconciliation.

Eligible Postsecondary Institutions must conduct a Term-Reconciliation by the end of each term. A Term-Reconciliation consists of an official acknowledgement by an authorized school official that the number of students submitted for payment and amount invoiced by the institution, and the number of students awarded and amount issued by the Commission, according to the SURFER system, is accurate on that date. The Commission will not issue HOPE funds for the following term until the Term-Reconciliation is complete. Funds are not returned to the Commission as part of the Term-Reconciliation process.

411.2. Award-Year Reconciliation.

In addition to the Term-Reconciliations, the Eligible Postsecondary Institution must conduct the Award-Year Reconciliation. The institution must conduct a complete student-by-student Award-Year Reconciliation with the Commission, and submit a Reconciliation Certification Form to the Commission by July 15, immediately following the completion of the Award Year.

411.3. Return of Funds.

The institution must return to the Commission any HOPE funds not utilized according to the Award-Year Reconciliation within 30 days of completing the Award-Year Reconciliation process. The institution must have a procedure in place to ensure that the HOPE funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e. State, institution).

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412. Records Retention Requirements.

412.1. Length of Retention.

An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the HOPE GED Grant Program, including, but not limited to individual student files for the later of three years after the Award Year in which the aid was awarded; or for such other period as required by an applicable statute, rule, or regulation; or such other time as requested in writing by the Commission.

412.2. Documentation.

a. Documentation contained within an individual student file or record, which supports the original determination of a student's eligibility, must be retained by the institution and available for review by the Commission on the institution's campus, located within the State of Georgia, for at least three years after the most recent Award Year for which the student received HOPE funds. (Refer to *Section 414*.) Institutions are permitted to maintain these documents in an imaged media format. The imaged media format must be capable of reproducing an accurate, legible, and complete copy of the original document.

b. Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, copies of Permanent Resident Alien Cards, Georgia State Income Tax Returns, student financial aid applications and academic transcripts from previous institutions. Documentation regarding a student's eligibility is not limited to files, records, and other information received and maintained by the institution's Student Financial Aid Office. Documentation supporting a student's eligibility that is received and maintained by the institution's Admissions Office, Registrars Office, Business Office, and other administrative operations of the institution must be available to the Commission for the purpose of Compliance Reviews. It is the institution's responsibility to resolve any inconsistencies or conflicting information within a student's records, prior to awarding or disbursing HOPE funds to the student.

412.3. Extended Retention.

An institution may be required to retain student records involved in a Compliance Review, audit, or investigation for more than the three-year retention period described above. If the three-year retention period expires before the issue in question is resolved, the institution must continue to retain all associated records until resolution is reached.

413. Administrative Reviews and Exceptions.

413.1. Administrative Reviews.

a. The HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations are applied to each student considered for such funds by appropriate officials of Eligible Postsecondary Institutions and by the administrative staff of the Commission. If a student believes a HOPE GED Grant rule, policy or regulation was incorrectly applied in his or her case, the student has the right to file a request for an Administrative Review with the Commission. The Commission will review the case and determine whether the rule or regulation was applied correctly and notify the student and institution of the determination.

b. In order for an Administrative Review to be considered, the student must submit a written request for an Administrative Review to the Commission office within 45 days of receiving notice of denial. If additional information is requested from the student, it must be provided within the time frame specified by the Commission. The Commission decides a case based only on documentation provided, rather than a personal presentation.

413.2. Exceptions.

Requests for Exceptions to the HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations cannot be considered, reviewed, or granted under any circumstances.

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414. Compliance Reviews.

414.1. Compliance Review Policy.

The Commission shall conduct Compliance Reviews of Eligible Postsecondary Institutions participating in the HOPE GED Grant program in order to assess institutional administration of the program and compliance with the program's regulations. Such Compliance Review shall be conducted no less frequently than once every three years in accordance with the Commission's *Compliance Review Process and Procedures* document, which is available on the *gsfc.org* website, under *School and Lender Information-Compliance Documents*.

414.2. Compliance Review Process.

The Commission selects a sampling of the institution's HOPE GED Grant recipients, for the Award Year under review, and the institution's files and records for the sample are examined to assure compliance. Each Eligible Postsecondary Institution must have all student records, which document and support the eligibility of that institution's HOPE GED Grant recipients, available for review by the Commission on the campus of the Eligible Postsecondary Institution, and such campus must be located within the State of Georgia. (Refer to *Section 412*.)

414.3. Institutional Repayment.

a. In the event it is determined that a postsecondary institution knowingly or through error certified an ineligible student to be eligible for HOPE GED Grant, the amount of such grant shall be refunded by the postsecondary institution to the Commission.

b. The Commission may suspend a postsecondary institution from receiving HOPE payments if it fails to refund any monies deemed due based on the Compliance Review.

c. Any person who knowingly makes or furnishes any false statement or misrepresentation, or who accepts such statement or misrepresentation knowing it to be false, for the purpose of enabling an ineligible student to obtain wrongfully a HOPE GED Grant award shall be guilty of a misdemeanor.

d. If later evidence, not available at the time of awarding, indicates that a student should not have received the HOPE GED Grant payment, then all future HOPE awards must be canceled. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution is held harmless by the Commission, if a student's file is adequately documented with available evidence and it is determined by the Commission that the institution was not at fault. Evidence is considered unavailable at the time of awarding if it was not available in the student's institutional files (i.e. financial aid, admissions, registrar, etc.). The institution must notify the student and the

Commission of a refund due. The student will be ineligible to receive additional state aid from the Commission until the repayment is paid in full, in accordance with *Section 410.2*. If the student's file is determined not to be adequately documented by the Commission, then the Eligible Postsecondary Institution may be responsible for the repayment.

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