



SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows
Scholarship Programs

Guidelines for Appeal
2014-15

SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Appeals Outline

SC HOPE and LIFE Scholarship:

The student is notified through the established institutional notification process that he/she is not eligible to receive the SC HOPE/LIFE Scholarship.

Palmetto Fellows Scholarship:

The student is notified through the established institutional notification process that he/she is not eligible to receive the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

Student obtains an Application for Appeal from the Commission on Higher Education's Web site at:
<http://www.che.sc.gov/Students,FamiliesMilitary/Appeals.aspx>
or by calling 1-803-737-2290

Student must submit the following:

1. Completed Application for Appeal;
2. Detailed letter of request for appeal, written and signed by student, that describes the extenuating circumstance(s);
3. Supporting documentation (see pages 6-7);
4. Academic transcript(s) from current and any previous institutions attended in an officially sealed envelope. All transcripts must be received at the Commission on Higher Education no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, September 26th 2014; and
5. All documentation must be received at the Commission on Higher Education by no later than 5:00 pm on **September 26th** 2014 for the appeal to be considered.

The Commission on Higher Education will only review **COMPLETE** SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship appeals packets received by no later than 5:00 pm on the September 26th deadline. All incomplete appeal packets and appeal documentation submitted after the September 26th deadline will not be considered. CHE will **not** contact students to inform them of missing materials from their appeals packet. CHE will notify the student of the rendered decision and, if approved, the institution will also be notified.

Upon receipt of a denial decision letter, the student will have 5 business days from receipt of letter to submit in writing a request to have the Appeals Committee reconsider their appeal. **Please note that no new information will be accepted with a student's request for reconsideration.**

Decisions should be rendered by January 1st. The decision rendered by the Appeals Committee is final.

SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Appeals Guidelines

Definition of Terms

An **appeal** shall be defined as the complete and timely documentation of an extenuating circumstance(s) that causes a student enrolled in college to fail to meet the academic requirements (cumulative grade point average and/or credit hours) for regaining or renewing a LIFE Scholarship or renewing a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. An **appeal** is also defined as the complete and timely documentation of an extenuating circumstance(s) that causes a SC HOPE Scholarship recipient to not receive the maximum available terms of funding. **Students who fail to meet the initial eligibility criteria or who were never eligible to receive the SC HOPE, LIFE, or Palmetto Fellows Scholarship are not eligible to submit an appeal. In addition, students who fail to appeal by the established September deadline upon the first fall term of re-enrollment at an eligible South Carolina institution are not eligible to submit an appeal.**

An **extenuating circumstance** shall be defined as a situation that involves a serious health condition of the student, death or serious health condition of an immediate family member, or a traumatic/extraordinary event. (see below)

An **immediate family member** shall be defined as the spouse, great-grandparents, grandparents, parents or legal guardians, brothers, sisters (including step-brothers/sisters), or children of either the student or the student's spouse.

A **serious health condition** shall be defined as an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves: (1) Any period of incapacity or treatment in connection with or consequent to inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or (2) Any period of incapacity requiring absence from classes **for more than five consecutive class days** that also involves continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a health care provider; or (3) Continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a health care provider for a chronic or long-term health condition that is incurable or so serious that, if not treated, would likely result in a period of incapacity that would adversely affect the academic performance of the student.

A **traumatic/extraordinary event** shall be defined as a sudden, uncontrollable event which adversely affects the student's academic performance, such as a natural disaster (earthquake, hurricane, tornado, etc.), divorce, sexual assault, required missionary duty, active military duty, death of a significant non-immediate family member, or any other events deemed traumatic/extraordinary by the Commission.

Extenuating Circumstances

Extenuating circumstances are the following situations:

- Serious health condition of the student;
- Death or serious health condition of an immediate family member; or
- Traumatic / Extraordinary event

In order to determine if a particular situation is an eligible extenuating circumstance, refer to the above "Definition of Terms." Please be aware that poor academic performance prior to the documented extenuating circumstance will impact the outcome of an appeal. **A student cannot appeal the loss of scholarship due to an institution's lack of or failure to provide adequate**

accommodations (i.e.: note taker, extended test taking time, attendance flexibility). Students who have never been awarded or received the LIFE, SC HOPE or Palmetto Fellows Scholarships are not eligible to file an appeal.

Please Note*: A traumatic event does not include college adjustment issues, such as homesickness, problems with roommates, problems with the faculty or staff at the college or university, difficult course-load, misunderstanding of scholarship requirements, misadvisement by financial aid officers or advisors, dependent care issues, transportation problems, financial issues, exceptions to scholarship regulation (initial eligibility, transfer issues, exceeding terms of eligibility), etc. *This is not an exhaustive list. Other issues may be deemed as inappropriate for appeal.

Notification of Scholarship Eligibility

SC HOPE and LIFE Scholarship:

Each institution is responsible for notifying students about financial aid awards through normal institutional notification procedures, such as personal financial award accounts within the institutional system available for all students to review; telephone notification; award letters; and student bills. Therefore, each student awarded the SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarship must make himself or herself aware of the institutional notification process and his or her SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarship eligibility. If a SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarship recipient finds that he or she is ineligible and would like to file an appeal, appeal applications are available on page 9 of this document. If a student wishes to submit an appeal, then he or she must follow the approved appeals process.

Palmetto Fellows Scholarship:

Each institution is responsible for notifying students about financial aid awards through normal institutional notification procedures, such as personal financial award accounts within the institutional system available for all students to review; telephone notification; award letters; and student bills. Therefore, each student awarded the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship must make himself or herself aware of the institutional notification process and his or her Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility. If a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship recipient finds that he or she is ineligible and would like to file an appeal, appeal applications are available on page 9 of this document.

The student's home institution will notify each Palmetto Fellow of the discontinuation of their Palmetto Fellows Scholarship and provide information about the opportunity to appeal. If a student wishes to submit an appeal, then he or she must follow the approved appeals process.

Time Limitation for Filing an Appeal

The regulations governing each scholarship program allows for you to appeal the loss of your scholarship and request reinstatement should you have a legitimate extenuating circumstance as defined in these guidelines that prevented you from meeting the continued eligibility criteria. Appeals solely pertaining to either LIFE or Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancements will not be considered. Only one appeal is allowed to be submitted each academic year. If you wish to submit an appeal, please contact your financial aid office for the appeals information or you may also access the appeals information on our website at www.che.sc.gov. Appeals must be submitted by the established September deadline upon the first fall term of re-enrollment at an eligible South Carolina institution after losing eligibility for a state scholarship. For this academic year, your appeals information must be received by the Commission no later than 5:00

pm on Friday, September 26, 2014. No appeals applications will be accepted AFTER 5:00 pm on September 26, 2014. Students who submit an appeal after the deadline will NOT have their appeal heard. Please note that students who have never been awarded or received the LIFE, SC HOPE or Palmetto Fellows Scholarships are not eligible to file an appeal.

Filing an Appeal

The following is a checklist of the appeals documentation the student must submit to be considered:

- Application for Appeal**
 - 1) The student may obtain an Application for Appeal from the Commission on Higher Education's website at <http://www.che.sc.gov/Students,FamiliesMilitary/Appeals.aspx>
 - 2) The application must be **completed and signed by the student. An unsigned application will be considered incomplete. It is not the responsibility of Commission staff to inform appellants if the application or portions thereof, are incomplete. Therefore, the incomplete appeal will not be considered.**

- Letter of Request (Must be written and signed by student)**
 - 1) The student must state the reason for appealing and describe the extenuating circumstance(s) as defined in these guidelines that prevented him/her from renewing the scholarship. A student should specify the term and academic year for which they are appealing.
 - 2) The student must provide an explanation as to why he/she did not attend any and all terms during the academic year in question, including Maymester and summer school (Sessions I & II). A student must receive permission from a doctor (see number 1 under "supporting documentation below") in order to take a reduced course load for the academic year in question. The reduced course load would need to be approved and the documentation of the reduced course load on file at the home institution's Disabilities Office and/or the financial aid office prior to the start of each term.
 - 3) **Summer school provides an additional opportunity for students to increase their LIFE GPA or Institutional GPA, and/or earn additional credit hours for continued scholarship eligibility. It is expected that students will attend Maymester and summer school to meet ALL continued eligibility requirements (credit hours and/or LIFE GPA) for the LIFE and (credit hours and/or institutional GPA) for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarships. A student must receive an excuse from a doctor if he/she is unable to earn the credits and GPA to regain their scholarship during Maymester and summer school. Financial situations will not be taken into consideration for not attending Maymester and summer school. Students who do not attend Maymester and summer school must provide an explanation as to why they did not attend.**
 - 4) The hours and grades earned during summer school will be considered in the appeals deliberation, and can affect the outcome of the appeal.
 - 5) If the student is appealing because of poor academic performance, the student must explain to the Committee whether he/she used the institutional appeals process to have the grades changed due to an extenuating circumstance each term. The student must also explain each term of poor academic performance.
 - 6) If the student is appealing due to a death of an immediate or a non-immediate family member, the student must explain in detail (1) the extent of the relationship; (2) how

- this situation affected his/her inability to meet academic requirements to renew the scholarship; and (3) how the situation meets the definition of a traumatic /extraordinary event. The student must also provide a letter from a professional counselor detailing how the traumatic or extraordinary event affected the student's academic performance during the academic year in question.
- 7) If the student is appealing due to a chronic or long-term health condition, the student must be registered with the Institutional Disabilities Office prior to the start of each academic term, and the student should address this in their letter.

□ **Supporting Documentation**

Students are ultimately responsible for providing sufficient supporting documentation with their appeal which satisfies the burden of proof of an extenuating circumstance. Self diagnosis or parental diagnosis of medical or mental health related conditions will not be considered for appeal. All appeals must include supporting documentation providing diagnosis from licensed professionals (i.e. physician, psychiatrist, etc.). Documentation may include:

For medical-related appeals:

- 1) Signed letter from the physician on letterhead (medical, psychiatrist, and/or psychologist) detailing duration and extent of serious health condition (this letter must include specific details and time period regarding the health condition) and any recommendations made regarding school non-attendance (fall, spring, Maymester and summer);
- 2) For chronic or long-term health conditions, official letter from the Institutional Disabilities Office verifying that the student is registered with their office. The letter must include specific details regarding all accommodations including any reduced course loads;
- 3) If the student served as a primary caregiver, documentation from a doctor or physician detailing time period in which student served in that capacity from doctor.

For death-related appeals:

- 1) Signed letter from the professional counselor on letterhead (psychiatrist, and/or psychologist, minister, etc.) detailing duration and extent of grief period (this letter must include specific details and time period regarding the effect the loss had on academic performance) and any recommendations made regarding school non-attendance (fall, spring, Maymester and summer);
- 2) Death certificate;
- 3) Newspaper obituary; and
- 4) Funeral program

For traumatic/extraordinary event appeals:

- 1) Signed letter from the professional counselor on letterhead (psychiatrist, and/or psychologist, minister, etc.) detailing duration and extent of event (this letter must include specific details and time period regarding the effect the event had on academic performance) and any recommendations made regarding school non-attendance (fall, spring, Maymester and summer);
- 2) Police report;
- 3) Major medical documentation (excluding insurance statements and bills); and
- 4) Legal/Court documents.

Other relevant documentation:

- 1) For poor academic performance, official letter from the college or university verifying the outcome of the institutional appeal or a statement from the student to explain why he/she did not utilize the institutional appeals process; and/or
- 2) Any other documentation, which will substantiate the appeal.

☐ **Official Academic Transcripts**

- 1) The student must request an official transcript(s) from current and any previous post-secondary institutions attended, including dual enrollment coursework. **Please note that grades and credits earned through dual enrollment must be presented on the official transcript from the institution through which they were earned** (high school transcripts will not be accepted). Academic transcript(s) must be in an officially sealed envelope from the institution(s) and may be mailed with the appeals application or be mailed directly from the institution to the Commission on Higher Education, Attn: Scholarship Appeals, 1122 Lady Street, Suite 300, Columbia, SC 29201 or be included with the Application for Appeal. **Please note that unofficial transcripts will not be considered.** It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all transcripts are sent by the institution and received by the Commission no later than 5:00pm on September 26, 2014.

☐ **Submission of Application for Appeal**

- 1) The completed application and all other documentation must be received by the Commission on Higher Education by **September 26th** of the academic year that scholarship aid is requested. Incomplete applications will not be considered. **It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all documents are submitted to the Commission by the deadline including a detailed student letter, completed application signed by the student, all necessary transcripts and supporting documentation. It is not the responsibility of CHE staff to ensure that the student's file is complete or that the information in the file is correct. Commission staff will NOT contact the student, parent/guardian or the institution to ensure the student's files are complete for review.**

Notification Process for Appeals Decisions

Once the decision regarding an appeal has been determined, the Commission on Higher Education will notify the student in writing, and, if approved, the institution will also be notified. Students who attend Maymester, Summer I or II should be aware that a decision on their appeal will be held until the student has completed all Summer work, and has submitted updated official transcripts to the Commission by the established September deadline.

Upon receipt of a denial decision letter, the student will have **5 business days** from receipt of letter to submit in writing a request to have the Appeals Committee reconsider his or her appeal (this request can be made via email, postal mail, or hand delivered to the Commission). **PLEASE NOTE THAT NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION WILL BE ACCEPTED WITH A RECONSIDERATION REQUEST.** No requests for re-appeal will be accepted after 5:00 pm on October 31, 2014. If the student has filed an appeal, and has yet to receive notification of a decision by November 1st, he/she is responsible for contacting the Commission on Higher Education to determine if a decision has been made, so that they may submit a re-

appeal before the November 1st deadline. **For re-appeals, the Appeals Committee will review only the information submitted with the student's original appeal. No additional information will be accepted after a decision has been rendered regarding the student's completed initial appeal. Decisions should be rendered by January 1st. The Appeals Committee's decision is final.** .

Students should understand that their appeal may not be granted. Therefore, they must take the necessary actions to secure funds to pay their tuition and fees during the time the appeal is being reviewed. If the appeal is granted, the scholarship funds may be awarded retroactively. In addition, CHE does not guarantee that a decision will be rendered prior to any institutional deadlines for tuition and fee payment. In these cases, it is up to the student to ensure that any financial obligation to the institution is fulfilled. If the appeal is granted, the scholarship funds may be awarded retroactively

Approval of Appeals

If an appeal is granted to a student who does not have the required cumulative 3.0 grade point average or the required number of credit hours, he or she may receive scholarship funding only for the academic year for which the appeal was granted. After the completion of that academic year, the student is expected to comply with all eligibility requirements as stipulated in the grant letter, in order to receive scholarship funding for each subsequent academic year.

Appeals Committee

The Appeals Committee Membership may be comprised of the following at a minimum:

- ◆ One representative from the staff of the SC Commission on Higher Education;
- ◆ One representative from the board of the Commission on Higher Education;
- ◆ Three institutional representatives of which one will be from a public senior college, one from a private senior college, and one from a two-year/technical college;
- ◆ One public or private high school guidance counselor;
- ◆ One business representative; and
- ◆ One representative from the General Assembly or legislative staff member.



SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
SC HOPE, LIFE, AND PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS
APPLICATION FOR APPEAL

Deadline: September 26, 2014, 5:00 pm

Part I. Student Information (Please Print)

Name: _____ Social Security Number: _____

Mailing Address: _____
Street City State Zip code

Phone Number: (____) _____ E-mail: _____

What year did you graduate from high school? _____ What term and year did you first enroll in college? _____

Institution that denied scholarship eligibility: _____

List any previous institutions attended: _____

Is this your first time filing an appeal with CHE? _____ If not, when did you previously appeal? _____

Scholarship Program: [] SC HOPE Scholarship [] LIFE Scholarship [] Palmetto Fellows Scholarship

Check all that apply:

- 1. I am appealing: [] Deficient Credit Hours [] Deficient Grade Point Average
2. Extenuating Circumstance: ___ Serious health condition of the student ___ Traumatic/Extraordinary Event
___ Death or serious health condition of an immediate family member

Part II. Appeal Documents

In order for the appeal to be considered by the Commission, the following must be submitted:

- 1. Completed Application for Appeal and signed by student;
2. Detailed letter of request for appeal, written and signed by student, that describes the extenuating circumstance(s);
3. Sufficient supporting documentation;
4. Academic transcript(s) in an officially sealed envelope from current and all previous post-secondary institutions attended, including dual enrollment coursework (high school transcripts not accepted); and
5. All documents must be received at the Commission on Higher Education no later than 5:00 pm on September 26, 2014.
6. Incomplete appeals documents and files will not be considered.

IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT ALL DOCUMENTS ARE RECEIVED BY SEPTEMBER 26, 2014. INCOMPLETE APPLICATIONS WILL NOT BE CONSIDERED.

The student is responsible for providing to the Commission on Higher Education any and all evidence, which satisfies the burden of proof. The Commission will consider any and all evidence provided concerning such claim but will not necessarily regard any single item of evidence as conclusive. Appeals regarding SC residency will not be considered.

I understand that I am responsible for ensuring that all required documentation is submitted to the Commission by the established deadline for a complete application and that all submitted information is true and accurate. I understand that Commission staff is not responsible for ensuring that my Appeals application is complete for review and that Commission staff will not contact me, my parents/guardians or the institution concerning documentation that is missing and/or incorrect in my application. I understand that decisions will be based entirely on written documents received by the September deadline. I also understand that my appeal may not be granted. Therefore, I must take the necessary action to secure funds to pay my tuition and fees during the time the appeal is being reviewed. I understand that if the appeal is granted, the scholarship funds may be awarded retroactively.

I agree that the information requested on this form may be released to the Commission on Higher Education and authorize that any information, including medical records, legal documents, etc. be released to the Commission on Higher Education. I also understand that I will have five business days from the receipt of the decision letter to submit my request to have the Appeals Committee reconsider my appeal, if denied. I also understand that no new information can be submitted with my re-appeal. I also understand that no requests for re-appeal will be accepted after 5:00 pm, November 1, 2014. I also understand that the decision rendered by the Appeals Committee is final.

Student Signature (required) _____ Date _____

I agree that any information regarding my appeal may be shared with my parents or legal guardians. If this is not signed, then the appeal will only be discussed with the student.

Student Signature (optional) _____ Date _____

Checklist for Appeals

In order to expedite the appeal's process, please complete the following checklist before mailing your appeal.

- Did you read the definition of a traumatic/extraordinary event? Please refer to pages 3-4 of the *Guidelines for Appeal* to determine if your traumatic/extraordinary event is considered to be an appealable situation.
- Did you attend Maymester and/or summer school to meet continued eligibility requirements, or at least to improve your standing in the eyes of the Appeals Committee? If not, please explain why you chose not to attend. If your reason for non-attendance was related to your extenuating circumstance, please provide the appropriate paperwork from a medical professional or counselor recommending your non-attendance.
- Did you complete, sign and enclose your application and letter? Have you provided a valid address, telephone number and email in case staff needs to contact you? (Please note that **the student** who is appealing must write/type and sign the letter. *Appeals packets containing unsigned letters and incomplete or previous versions of the Appeals Application will not be considered.*)

Letter

- Did you provide an explanation and documentation for any summer school sessions that you did not attend? *It is expected that students will attend Maymester and/or summer school to meet ALL continued eligibility requirements (credit hours and/or GPA) for the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships. A student must receive permission from a doctor if he/she is unable to earn the credits and GPA to regain their scholarship during summer school. Financial situations will not be taken into consideration for not attending summer school.*
- Does your letter address whether or not you underwent the institutional appeals process?
- If suffering from a disability, chronic or long term illness, did you register with the Office of Disabilities? If you were registered, did you include this documentation in your appeal?

Doctor's Letter/Medical Documentation (if applicable)

- Is your doctor's letter on official letterhead (not paper from a prescription pad) and is it signed by the doctor?
- Does your doctor's letter describe?
 - the specific time periods of your illness?
 - the diagnosis and extent of your illness?
 - the effect that your illness had on your academic performance?
 - any recommendations regarding non-attendance?

If you withdrew from classes, does your doctor's letter state whether or not he/she recommended withdrawal? If your doctor did not recommend withdrawal, does your letter state your doctor's opinion regarding your ability to attend classes?

Does your medical documentation/doctor's letter cover the entire time period of poor academic performance and or non-attendance? *(If the student is appealing because of poor academic performance, the student must explain to the Committee whether he/she used the institutional appeals process to have the grades changed due to an extenuating circumstance each term. The student must also explain each term of poor academic performance.)*

If you are appealing due to death of a family member/non-immediate family member, did you include a letter from the counselor explaining how this traumatic extenuating circumstance affected your academic performance?

Transcripts

Did you send or request for transcripts to be sent for all of the colleges/universities you have attended? Is each transcript in an official, sealed envelope from the institution? Have they been delivered to the Commission by the September deadline?

If you completed dual enrollment coursework, did you request an official transcript from the institution through which the coursework was earned (excluding high school transcripts)? Have they been delivered to the Commission by the September deadline? *(Even though some institutions will place credits on their transcript if they are earned at a different institution, they may not list the grades earned, which could impact an appeal. For this reason, we ask for official transcripts from every institution attended, even those institutions attended through dual credit programs).*