

SC Uniform Grading Scale (UGS) Conversions Process for South Carolina Residents Attending Out-of-State High Schools

Purpose

In March 2006, the General Assembly developed a Budget Proviso concerning South Carolina Scholarship Programs and out-of-state eligibility (see, 5A.29, of 2006-07 General Appropriations Budget). Beginning in Fiscal Year 2006-2007, students who are South Carolina residents and enrolled in out-of-state high schools shall be eligible to receive the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships. Eligibility shall be calculated utilizing criteria for in-state high school students. Any fees associated with the resulting conversion of grades or class rank to the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale shall be the responsibility of the student.

To receive the LIFE Scholarship at a four-year institution, in-state students must meet two of the following three eligibility requirements: minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA based on the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale, minimum 1100 SAT/24 ACT, and top 30% of the graduating senior class. Students at two-year institutions are only required to meet the GPA requirement to qualify. In contrast, out-of-state students were only allowed to meet the GPA and SAT/ACT requirements. Out-of-state students were not allowed to qualify using the rank requirement. Under the Budget Proviso (5A.29), students that graduate from preparatory high schools out of state are able to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship based upon the rank requirement in addition to one of the other initial eligibility requirements.

To receive the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, in-state students must meet one of the following sets of eligibility requirements:

Early Awards:

- Earn a minimum 3.50 cumulative GPA by the end of the junior year; rank in the top six percent of the class at the end of either the sophomore or the junior year; and score at least 1200 on the SAT or 27 on the ACT by the November test administration of the senior year; or
- Score at least 1400 on the SAT or 32 on the ACT through the November test administration of the senior year and earn a minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA at the end of the junior year, without regard to class rank.

Final Awards:

- Score at least 1200 on the SAT (27 on the ACT) by the June national test administration of the senior year; earn a minimum 3.50 cumulative GPA on the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale at the end of the senior year, and rank in the top six percent of the class at the end of the senior year; or
- Score at least 1400 on the SAT (32 on the ACT) by the June national test administration and earn a minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA on the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale at the end of the senior year.

Previously, out-of-state students had to meet the second set of eligibility requirements as listed above and were not allowed to qualify for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship under the first option, which includes a class rank requirement on the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale.

Under the Budget Proviso (5A.29), students that graduate from preparatory high schools out of state are able to qualify for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship based upon both options.

Finally, to receive the SC HOPE Scholarship, students must graduate with a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA based on the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale to receive the one-year freshman Scholarship at a four-year institution. The out-of-state high schools convert grades to the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale for Scholarship eligibility.

Definitions

A. “Academic year” is defined as the twelve month period during which a full-time student is expected to earn thirty credit hours. The period of time used to measure the academic year will consist of the fall, spring and summer terms (or its equivalent).

B. “Annual credit hour requirement” shall be defined as an average of thirty (30) credit hours earned at the end of the academic year based on initial college enrollment at all eligible institutions attended, excluding hours for remedial, continuing education, and non-degree coursework. Credit hours earned before high school graduation, Advanced Placement (AP) credit hours, exempted credit hours, and/or credit hours earned on active duty must count toward the annual credit hour requirement.

C. “Attempted credit hours” shall be defined as courses in which a student earns a grade and is included in the grade point calculation for that institution. Eligible credit hours that do not transfer must also be included. Credit hours earned through dual-enrollment prior to high school graduation must be included in the LIFE GPA. Exempted credit hours, Advanced Placement (AP), College Level Examination Program (CLEP), remedial/developmental courses, non-degree credit courses for an associate’s degree or higher, Pass/Fail and non-penalty withdrawal credit hours are excluded from the “attempted credit hours.” If a student transfers, refer to the institution’s grading policy where the credit hours were earned. Any credit hours attempted or earned before high school graduation, hours exempted by examination, or Advanced Placement (AP) credit hours do not count against the terms of eligibility.

D. “Degree-seeking student” is defined as any full-time student enrolled in an eligible institution which leads to the first one-year certificate, first two-year program or associate’s degree, or first bachelor’s or program of study that is structured so as not to require a bachelor’s degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree. Upon completion of the first one-year certificate, first two-year program or associate’s degree, or first bachelor’s or program of study that is structured so as not to require a bachelor’s degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree, the student cannot use scholarship funds to pursue a program in the same or preceding level.

E. “Eligible institution” shall be defined, solely for the purposes of the annual credit hour requirement and the LIFE GPA calculation, as an accredited public or independent postsecondary, degree-granting institution located in-state or out-of-state. The institution must be accredited by an agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in federally funded financial aid programs. This list may be found on the US Department of Education’s website.

F. "Eligible program of study" is defined as a program of study leading to: 1) at least a one-year educational program that leads to a first certificate or other recognized educational credential (e.g., diploma); 2) the first associate's degree; 3) at least a two-year program that is acceptable for full credit towards a bachelor's degree; 4) the first bachelor's degree; or 5) a program of study that is structured so as not to require a bachelor's degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree.

G. "Felonies" shall be defined as a crimes classified under State statute (16-1-10) and typically require imprisonment for more than one year.

H. "Full-time student" shall mean a student who has matriculated into an eligible program of study and who enrolls full-time, usually fifteen credit hours for fall and spring terms or twelve credit hours for fall, eight credit hours for winter, and twelve credit hours for spring trimester terms. The student must earn an average of thirty credit hours per academic year to receive a LIFE Scholarship. In order for the student to be eligible for Scholarship disbursement, the student must be enrolled full-time at the home institution as stipulated by Title IV Regulations, except that credit hours may not include remedial/developmental, continuing education, and non-degree credit courses for an associate's degree or higher.

I. "High school" is defined as a high school located in South Carolina, an approved home school program as defined in the State Statute, (Sections 59-65-40, 45, and 47) or a college preparatory high school located outside of the state while the student is a dependent of a legal resident of South Carolina who has custody or pays child support and college expenses of the dependent high school student in accordance with State Statute 59-112-10. A "preparatory high school" (out-of-state) is defined as a school recognized by the state where the school is located to offer curricula through the twelfth grade and prepares students for college entrance.

J. "Initial college enrollment" shall mean the first time the student matriculates into a postsecondary degree-granting institution after high school graduation, completion of a GED/Adult Education Program or completion of an approved home school program. The terms of eligibility and the annual credit hour requirement are based upon initial college enrollment and continuous enrollment. This means that students must adhere to the 30 credit hour requirement even if they have a break in enrollment. Any break in enrollment (excluding summer) will also count against the terms of eligibility.

K. "LIFE GPA" shall be defined as the cumulative grade point average calculation that includes credit hours and grades earned at all eligible institutions based on a 4.0 scale. The LIFE grade point average must not include attempted credit hours earned for continuing education courses, non-degree credit courses for an associate's degree or higher and remedial/developmental courses. See Section 62-900.55 for the steps to calculate the "LIFE GPA."

L. "Misdemeanor offenses" shall be defined as a crimes classified under State statute (16-1-100) which are typically punishable by fine or imprisonment for less than one year. A complete listing is located in title 16 of State statute. Examples of alcohol and/or drug misdemeanors in South Carolina include but are not limited to possession of alcohol under the age of 21, possession of marijuana/illegal drugs, open-container, transfer of alcohol to person under 21, false information as to age (fake ID), etc.

M. "Non-degree credit courses" shall be defined as courses that count towards graduation in a

certificate or diploma program only. Non-degree credit courses must not be used in the “LIFE GPA” calculation or towards the annual credit hour requirement for an associate’s degree or higher.

N. “Out-of-state high school” is defined as a preparatory high school located outside of South Carolina in which a student is attending and is a dependent of a legal resident of South Carolina who has custody or pays child support and college expenses of the dependent high school student in accordance with State Statute 59-112-10. A "preparatory high school" (out-of-state) is defined as a school recognized by the state in which the school is located to offer curricula through the twelfth grade and prepares students for college entrance.

O. “Relevant class” shall be defined as the graduating senior class for the LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships. For the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, the relevant class shall be defined as the sophomore or junior class for early award applications and graduating senior class for final award applications.

P. “Remedial/developmental coursework” shall mean sub-collegiate level preparatory courses in English, mathematics, reading and any courses classified as remedial by the institution where the course is taken.

Q. “South Carolina resident” shall be defined as an individual who satisfies the requirements of residency in accordance with the State of South Carolina State Statute for Tuition and Fees, Section 59-112-10 and all related guidelines and regulations promulgated by the Commission on Higher Education as established by the institutional residency officer each academic year.

Student Eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship

A. To be eligible for a LIFE Scholarship, students enrolled in out-of-state high schools must:

1. Be a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident that meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under State Residency Statutes; and

2. Be a South Carolina resident for in-state purposes at the time of high school graduation and at the time of enrollment at the institution, as set forth by Section 59-112-10. The student must be graduating from a preparatory high school outside this State, while a dependent of a parent or guardian who is a legal resident of this State and has custody of the dependent according to State Statute, Section 59-149-50A or a student whose parent or guardian has served in or has retired from one of the United States Armed Forces within the last four years, paid income taxes in this State for a majority of the years of service, and is a resident of this State;

3. Meet two of the following three criteria if a first-time entering freshman at an eligible four-year institution:

a. Earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) based on the Uniform Grading Scale (UGS) upon high school graduation. No other grading policy will be allowed to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship. Grade point averages must be reported to two decimal places (minimum) and may not be rounded. For example, a student who earns a 2.99 GPA is not eligible. Institutions shall use the final GPA as reported on the official transcript or reported and documented by Commission on Higher Education.

b. Score at least an 1100 on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) or an equivalent ACT score of 24. Test scores will be accepted through the June national test administration of the SAT and ACT during the year of high school graduation. The student must use the highest SAT Math score combined with the highest SAT Critical Reading score (formerly known as the Verbal score). It is permissible to select scores from different test administrations in order to obtain the qualifying composite score. Students cannot use the Writing subsection score to obtain the qualifying composite score. The composite ACT score must be based upon one test administration.

c. Rank in the top thirty percent of the graduating class consisting of high school diploma candidates only. The rank must also be based on the Uniform Grading Scale only. Ranking percentages must be reported to two decimal places (minimum) and may not be rounded. For example, a student who has a class rank of 13 of 43 ($13/43 \times 100 = 30.23\%$) will not rank in the top thirty percent of the class since 30.23% is not within thirty percent. To determine the top thirty percent for graduating classes with three or less students, the student who is ranked number one in the class would be considered in the top thirty percent for LIFE Scholarship eligibility. Institutions shall use the final ranking as reported by the high school on the official transcript or reported and documented by the Commission on Higher Education.

4. Earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) on the Uniform Grading Scale upon high school graduation and score at least an 1100 on the Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT I) or an equivalent ACT score of 24 if a first-time entering freshman graduates from a non-ranking South Carolina high school, non-ranking out-of-state preparatory high school and attends an eligible four-year institution;

5. Earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) upon high school graduation on the Uniform Grading Scale if a first-time entering freshman at an eligible two-year or technical institution. No other grading policy will be allowed to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship. Grade point ratios must be reported to two decimal places (minimum) and may not be rounded. For example, a student who earns a 2.99 GPA is not eligible. Institutions shall use the final GPA as reported by the high school on the official transcript or reported and documented by the Commission on Higher Education;

6. Be admitted, enrolled full-time, and classified as a degree-seeking student at a public or independent institution in South Carolina;

7. Certify that he/she has never been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to any felonies and/or any alcohol/drug related misdemeanor offenses under the laws of this or any other state or under the laws of the United States by submitting a signed affidavit each academic year to the institution. However, a high school or college student who has been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* of an alcohol/drug related misdemeanor offense is only ineligible for the next academic year of enrollment at an eligible institution after the date of the adjudication, conviction or plea. If the adjudication, conviction, or plea occurs during the academic year after the student has already submitted a signed affidavit to the institution, the student will be eligible to receive the Scholarship the remainder of the academic year. However, the student will be ineligible for the Scholarship the following entire academic year of enrollment. If a student completes a pretrial intervention program and has his/her record expunged the conviction will not affect Scholarship eligibility; and

8. Certify that he/she has not defaulted and does not owe a refund or repayment on any federal or state financial aid. If a student has an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) or its equivalent on file, the ISIR information will be used to verify default status or refund/repayment owed on any Federal or State financial aid. Students who have not completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) must have an affidavit on file to verify that he/she is not in default and does not owe a refund or repayment on any Federal or State financial aid including, state grants/scholarships, Federal Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Perkins Loan and Federal Stafford Loan.

B. Any credit hours attempted or earned before high school graduation, hours exempted by examination, or Advanced Placement (AP) credit hours do not count against the terms of eligibility as provided in State Statute, Section 59-149-60. The credit hours earned before high school graduation can be used toward the credit hour requirement. Credit hours earned through CLEP or AP will be used toward the credit hour requirement.

C. First-time entering freshmen will not be penalized for any credit hours earned during the summer session immediately prior to the student's initial college enrollment. The credit hours earned will not count against the terms of eligibility. The credit hours may be used toward the annual credit hour requirement.

D. Students who complete their high school graduation requirements prior to the official graduation date reported on the final high school transcript may be eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship dependent on the approval of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE). The student must complete and submit an Early Graduation Application, an official high school transcript, an official letter from the high school principal verifying that he/she has met all graduation requirements, and SAT/ACT scores (if attending a four-year institution) by the established deadline. Early graduates cannot use class rank in order to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship at four-year institutions for the spring semester since the class has not officially graduated. Early graduates may use class rank to receive the Scholarship after the class officially graduates. Early graduates who enroll mid-year (spring term) and are awarded the LIFE Scholarship through the Early Graduation process will officially begin their initial college enrollment. In order to receive the LIFE Scholarship the next academic year, the student must earn a minimum of fifteen credit hours and a 3.0 "LIFE GPA" at the end of the academic year. The student will be eligible to receive the maximum number of terms of eligibility based on initial college enrollment. If a student does not submit an early graduation application for the spring term and has not officially graduated, the student should not have received the LIFE Scholarship and that term will not count against his/her terms of Scholarship eligibility.

E. First-time entering freshmen who enroll mid-year (spring semester) are eligible for the LIFE Scholarship if they qualified upon high school graduation.

F. LIFE Scholarship funds may not be applied to the cost of continuing education, remedial/developmental or non-degree credit courses for an associate's degree or higher. Twelve credit hours of the courseload must be non-remedial/developmental, non-continuing education or degree-credit courses for an associate's degree or higher in order to receive LIFE Scholarship funds. Continuing education, non-degree credit for an associate's degree or higher and remedial/developmental courses will not be included in the "LIFE GPA" or credit hour calculations.

G. Non-degree credit hours shall be used to meet the full-time eligibility criteria for a diploma or certificate program only. Students must sign an affidavit certifying that they understand that non-degree credit hours will not be used in calculating the “LIFE GPA” or credit hour requirements if they are enrolled in an Associate’s degree or higher.

H. First-time entering freshmen attending an eligible two-year or technical college who enroll full-time in remedial/developmental courses during the first term(s) will not be eligible for Scholarship funds during this period. Credit hours earned during the term(s) of remedial/developmental enrollment will not be used to determine remaining Scholarship eligibility at the completion of remediation unless the student has completed at least twelve credit hours of non-remedial/developmental coursework each term of enrollment. The student will be eligible for the Scholarship for the term following completion of remediation if the student was eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship upon high school graduation. If the student requires more than one academic year of remedial/developmental coursework, then he/she will not be eligible for the LIFE Scholarship the term after completion of remediation. If the student was not eligible for the Scholarship upon high school graduation, the student must meet the conditions set forth in Section I below in order to gain the LIFE Scholarship.

I. Students who do not meet the scholarship eligibility requirements upon high school graduation and enroll full-time in remedial/developmental courses must meet the scholarship eligibility requirements (earn a 3.0 “LIFE GPA” and earn an average of thirty credit hours for the academic year) at the end of the first year of enrollment in non-remedial/developmental courses to be eligible to receive the scholarship for the second year of enrollment in non-remedial/developmental courses.

J. Students receiving a LIFE Scholarship are not eligible to receive a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, SC HOPE Scholarship or Lottery Tuition Assistance.

K. Students who have already been awarded their first bachelor’s degree, graduate degree or program of study that is structured so as not to require a bachelor’s degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree are not eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship.

L. All documents required for determining LIFE Scholarship eligibility must be submitted to the institution by their established deadline(s). Students must submit official transcripts from all previous and current institutions, which provide evidence to calculate the “LIFE GPA,” determine initial college enrollment and earned annual credit hour requirement. Students that complete coursework at another institution at any time during the academic year (fall, spring, summer) must submit an official transcript to the home institution at the end of the academic year to determine eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship.

M. First-time entering freshmen who attended out-of-state preparatory high schools or graduated from a SC high school prior to the full implementation of the Uniform Grading Scale (UGS) in 2004 (if the high school had not already converted to UGS) must have their high school transcript converted to the Uniform Grading Scale in order to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship. In order to meet the GPA and rank requirements, students must request that staff appointed by the Commission on Higher Education convert the students’ grades to the Uniform Grading Scale. The out-of-state preparatory high school must provide official transcripts to the Commission on Higher Education for all grade conversions. For the class rank requirement, the out-of-state preparatory high school must agree to submit official copies of transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class to the Commission on Higher Education, or the high school must agree to convert the grades for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class to

the SC Uniform Grading Scale. In the event that the out-of-state preparatory high school does not agree to submit official copies of transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class to the Commission on Higher Education or the high school does not agree to convert the grades for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class to the SC Uniform Grading Scale, then the student must qualify for the LIFE Scholarship using the minimum 3.00 cumulative GPA and minimum 1100 SAT/24 ACT eligibility requirements. If official copies of high school transcripts cannot be obtained from the high school for grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale, then the student must earn eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship by earning a minimum 3.0 LIFE GPA and 30 credit hours by the end of each academic year at an eligible institution to be awarded the LIFE Scholarship the next academic year. Any fees and requirements associated with grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale are the sole responsibility of the student. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria, including the South Carolina residency requirement.

N. Students that graduate from preparatory high schools out of state must meet all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the LIFE Scholarship.

O. Institutions must comply with all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the LIFE Scholarship.

Student Eligibility for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship

A. In order to qualify for consideration for a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, students enrolled in out-of-state high schools must:

1. Meet the eligibility criteria stipulated under the “Student Application” Section;
2. Be enrolled as a senior in an eligible high school;
3. Be a legal resident of South Carolina as defined in applicable State Statute governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes at the time of college enrollment;
4. Be a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident that meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under State Residency Statute;
5. Be seriously considering attending, have applied, or have been accepted for admission to an eligible four-year bachelor’s degree-granting independent or public institution in South Carolina as a first-time, fulltime, degree-seeking student;
6. Certify that he/she has not been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to any felonies, alcohol, or drug related offenses under the laws of this or any other state or under the laws of the United States by submitting a signed affidavit each academic year to the institution testifying to the fact, except that a high school or college student who has been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* of an alcohol or drug related misdemeanor offense is only ineligible for the next academic year after the date of the adjudication, conviction or plea; and
7. Submit the official Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Application by the established deadline(s) and comply with all the directions contained therein.

B. The high schools shall ensure that all students meeting the eligibility criteria are given the opportunity to be included in the applicant pool.

C. A student who graduates immediately after the high school junior year is eligible to apply for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, providing that the student meets all eligibility requirements as described in the “Student Eligibility” Section, and providing that the student is entering an eligible independent or public institution not later than the fall term immediately following high school graduation.

D. Students receiving a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship are not eligible for a LIFE Scholarship, SC HOPE Scholarship or Lottery Tuition Assistance.

E. Any student who attempts to obtain or obtains a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship through means of a willfully false statement or failure to reveal any material fact, condition, or circumstances affecting eligibility will be subject to applicable civil or criminal penalties, including loss of the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

F. Institutions must comply with all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

Student Application for Palmetto Fellows Scholarship

A. The Commission on Higher Education will send information regarding the application process to all South Carolina high schools, homeschool associations and district superintendents. High school officials will identify students who meet the specified eligibility criteria by each established deadline. Applications must be submitted no later than the established deadline(s) along with the appropriate signatures, official transcripts and test score verification to the Commission on Higher Education. Students who are enrolled at out-of-state high schools are personally responsible for contacting the Commission on Higher Education about the application process and must adhere to the same established deadline(s).

B. The high schools and homeschool associations shall submit a list to the Commission on Higher Education indicating the names of all students who meet the eligibility criteria according to the high school. The list shall indicate whether the student is submitting a completed application or declining the opportunity to submit an application. If the student declines the opportunity to submit an application, the high school will submit a form for each of these students, signed by both the student and the parent/guardian, and indicating the reason(s) for not submitting an application. Students who decline to apply for the Scholarship forfeit any future eligibility under the Program.

C. Applications for early awards must be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship by the date established in December each academic year. Students must meet one of the following academic criteria in order to be eligible to apply for the early awards (students cannot use early awards criteria to meet the final awards deadline):

1. Earn a minimum 3.50 cumulative GPA by the end of the junior year; rank in the top six percent of the class at the end of either the sophomore or the junior year; and score at least 1200 on the SAT or 27 on the ACT by the November test administration of the senior year; or

2. Score at least 1400 on the SAT or 32 on the ACT through the November test administration of the senior year and earn a minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA at the end of the junior year, without regard to class rank.

D. Applications for final awards must be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship by the date established in June each academic year. Students must meet one of the following academic criteria in order to be eligible to apply for the final awards:

1. Score at least 1200 on the SAT or 27 on the ACT through the June test administration of the senior year; earn a minimum 3.50 cumulative GPA at the end of the senior year; and rank in the top six percent of the class at the end of the senior year; or

2. Score at least 1400 on the SAT or 32 on the ACT through the June test administration of the senior year and earn a minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA at the end of the senior year, without regard to class rank.

E. Students must have official certification that they earned the requisite score on the SAT or an equivalent ACT score. The Commission on Higher Education shall convert all ACT scores to the equivalent SAT scores. In order to determine the minimum composite score for the SAT, students must use the highest Math score combined with the highest Critical Reading score (formerly known as the Verbal score). Students may use the highest Math score and highest Critical Reading/Verbal score from different test administrations. However, students cannot use the Writing subsection score to meet the minimum SAT score requirement. Students may use the SAT version prior to March 2005 and/or the new version to meet the SAT score requirement. In order to determine the minimum composite score for the ACT, students must use the highest composite score based upon one test administration.

F. Grade point averages must be based on the Uniform Grading Scale, reported with at least two decimal places, and may not be rounded up.

G. The number of students included in the top six percent of the class will be the next whole number if the top six percent is not already a whole number. For example, a class size of 185 students would include the top twelve students since 11.1 rounds up to twelve. For those high schools that have fewer than twenty students in the class, the top two students (students ranked as number one and two) shall be considered for the Scholarship regardless of whether they rank in the top six percent of the class. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria.

H. Students who attend out-of-state preparatory high schools must meet the GPA and class rank requirements based on the SC Uniform Grading Scale (UGS). In order to meet the GPA and rank requirements, students must request that staff appointed by the Commission on Higher Education convert the students' grades to the Uniform Grading Scale. The out-of-state preparatory high school must provide official transcripts to the Commission on Higher Education for all grade conversions. For the class rank requirement, the out-of-state preparatory high school must agree to submit copies of official transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the sophomore or junior class for early Palmetto Fellows Scholarship awards and copies of official transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class for final Palmetto Fellows Scholarship awards to the Commission on Higher Education, or the high school must agree to convert the grades for all diploma eligible students in the relevant class to the Uniform Grading Scale. In the event that the out-of-state preparatory high school does not agree to submit official copies of transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the sophomore or junior class for early Scholarship

awards or official copies of transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class for final Scholarship awards to the Commission on Higher Education or the high school does not agree to convert the grades for all diploma eligible students in the relevant class to the Uniform Grading Scale, then the student must qualify for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship using the minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA and minimum 1400 SAT/32 ACT eligibility requirements. If official copies of high school transcripts cannot be obtained from the high school for grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale, then the student cannot be awarded the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. Any fees and requirements associated with grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale are the sole responsibility of the student. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria, including South Carolina residency requirements.

I. Students that graduate from preparatory high schools out of state must meet all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

J. Institutions must comply with all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

Student Eligibility for the SC HOPE Scholarship

A. To be eligible for a SC HOPE Scholarship, students enrolled in out-of-state high schools must:

1. Be a U.S. citizen or a legal permanent resident that meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under State residency statutes;
2. Be a South Carolina resident for in-state purposes at the time of high school graduation and at the time of enrollment at the institution, as set forth by Section 59-112-10 and be a student graduating from a preparatory high school outside this State, while a dependent of a parent or guardian who is a legal resident of this State and has custody of the dependent according to State Statute, Section 59-149-50A;
3. Earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) based on the Uniform Grading Scale (UGS) upon high school graduation. No other grading policy will be allowed to qualify for the SC HOPE Scholarship. Grade point averages must be reported to two decimal places (minimum) and may not be rounded. For example, a student who earns a 2.99 GPA is not eligible. A student who earns a 3.00 GPA or above is eligible. Institutions shall use the final cumulative GPA as reported by the high school on the official high school transcript or reported and documented by the Commission on Higher Education;
4. Be admitted, enrolled full-time, and classified as a degree-seeking undergraduate student in an eligible institution in South Carolina;
5. Certify that he/she has never been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to any felonies and/or any alcohol/drug related misdemeanor offenses under the laws of this or any other state or under the laws of the United States by submitting a signed affidavit each academic year to the institution testifying to the fact. However, a high school or college student who has been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* of an alcohol or other drug related misdemeanor offense is only ineligible for the next academic year of enrollment at an eligible institution after the date of the adjudication, conviction or plea. If the adjudication, conviction, or plea occurs during the academic year after the student has already

submitted a signed affidavit to the institution, the student is still eligible for the Scholarship for the remainder of the academic year. However, the student will not be eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship the following fall, spring, and summer terms (or their equivalent), even if all other eligibility requirements have been met. If a student completes a pretrial intervention program and has his/her record expunged, the conviction will not affect Scholarship eligibility; and

7. In order to meet the GPA requirement, a student who attended an out-of-state preparatory high school or graduated from a SC high school prior to the full implementation of the Uniform Grading Scale in 2004 must request that staff appointed by the Commission on Higher Education convert the student's grades to the UGS (if the high school had not already converted to the UGS). Any fees and requirements associated with the conversion are the responsibility of the student. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria, including SC residency requirements.

B. Any credit hours attempted or earned before high school graduation, hours exempted by examination, or Advanced Placement (AP) credit hours do not count against the terms of eligibility.

C. Students who complete their high school graduation requirements prior to the official graduation date reported on the final high school transcript may be eligible to receive the SC HOPE Scholarship pending the approval of the Commission on Higher Education (CHE). The institutional representative must complete and submit an Early Graduation Application Form and all appropriate documentation as deemed necessary by CHE for each student by the established deadline. The student must request and submit a letter from the high school principal verifying that he/she has met all graduation requirements along with an official high school transcript.

D. Service members of the United States Armed Forces will not be penalized for any credit hours earned while on active duty. The credit hours earned will not count against the terms of eligibility.

E. Early graduates who enroll mid-year and are classified as degree-seeking will officially begin their initial college enrollment.

F. SC HOPE Scholarship funds may not be applied to the costs of continuing education or remedial/developmental courses. Twelve credit hours of the course load must be nonremedial/developmental and non-continuing education courses in order to receive SC HOPE Scholarship funds.

G. Students receiving a SC HOPE Scholarship are not eligible for a LIFE Scholarship, Palmetto Fellows Scholarship or Lottery Tuition Assistance.

H. Students who meet all eligibility requirements for the SC HOPE Scholarship are eligible to receive Scholarship funds for the freshman year of attendance only.

I. All documents required for determining SC HOPE Scholarship eligibility must be submitted to the institution by their established deadline(s). Students must submit official transcripts from all previous and current institutions, which provide evidence to determine initial college enrollment.

J. Students who attend out-of-state preparatory high schools must meet the GPA requirement based on the SC Uniform Grading Scale (UGS). In order to meet the GPA requirement, students must request that staff appointed by the Commission on Higher Education convert the students'

grades to the Uniform Grading Scale. The out-of-state preparatory high school must provide official transcripts to the Commission on Higher Education for all grade conversions. If official copies of high school transcripts cannot be obtained from the high school for grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale, then the student cannot be awarded the SC HOPE Scholarship. The student must earn eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship by earning a minimum 3.0 LIFE GPA and 30 credit hours by the end of each academic year at an eligible institution to be awarded the LIFE Scholarship the next academic year. Any fees and requirements associated with grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale are the sole responsibility of the student. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria, including South Carolina residency requirements.

K. Students who graduate from preparatory high schools out of state must meet all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the SC HOPE Scholarship.

L. Institutions must comply with all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the SC HOPE Scholarship.

SC Uniform Grading Scale Conversion Process

A. Institutions will identify students who meet the specified eligibility criteria by each established deadline. Institutions are responsible for notifying the Commission on Higher Education concerning conversions to the SC Uniform Grading Scale for students enrolled in out-of-state preparatory high schools to qualify for state scholarship eligibility. Applications must be submitted no later than the established deadline(s) along with the appropriate signatures, official transcripts and test score verification to the Commission on Higher Education.

B. Students who are enrolled in out-of-state preparatory high schools are personally responsible for contacting the Commission on Higher Education and for submitting all required documentation concerning the SC Uniform Grading Scale Conversion Process and must adhere to all established deadline(s).

C. Student must submit to the Commission on Higher Education:

1. Completed Scholarship Grade Conversion Form;
2. Official high school transcript(s) from current and all previous schools attended in a sealed envelope;
3. Payment and fees; and
4. All other required documentation.

D. Applications for early awards must be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education for the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and SC HOPE Scholarships by the date established in December each academic year. Students must meet all eligibility requirements as established by law and regulation for the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships in order to be eligible to apply for the early awards.

E. Applications for Uniform Grading Scale conversions for Palmetto Fellows Scholarship final awards must be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education by the date established in June for the Scholarship final award each academic year. Applications for Uniform Grading Scale conversions for the LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships must be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education by the established deadline in July each academic year.

F. For the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, students must have official certification that they earned the requisite score on the SAT I or an equivalent ACT score. The Commission on Higher Education shall convert all ACT scores to the equivalent SAT scores. In order to determine the minimum composite score for the SAT, students must use the highest Math score combined with the highest Critical Reading score (formerly known as the Verbal score). Students may use the highest Math score and highest Critical Reading/Verbal score from different test administrations. However, students cannot use the Writing subsection score to meet the minimum SAT score requirement. Students may use the SAT version prior to March 2005 and/or the new version to meet the SAT score requirement. In order to determine the minimum composite score for the ACT, students must use the highest composite score based upon one test administration.

G. The out-of-state preparatory high school must submit to the Commission on Higher Education an official copy of the student's transcript for GPA conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale.

H. For the class rank requirement, the out-of-state preparatory high school must:

1. Agree to submit copies of official transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class to the Commission on Higher Education for conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale for a student to qualify based on the class rank requirement. For the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, the out-of-state preparatory high school must agree to submit copies of official transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the sophomore or junior class for early Palmetto Fellows Scholarship awards and copies of official transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class for final Palmetto Fellows Scholarship awards to the Commission on Higher Education; or
2. Agree to convert the grades for all diploma eligible students in the graduating senior class to the Uniform Grading Scale for a student to qualify based on the class rank requirement. For the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, the out-of-state preparatory high school must agree to convert the grades for all diploma eligible students in the relevant class to the SC Uniform Grading Scale. Institutions must use the final ranking as reported by the high school on the official transcript.
3. In the event that the out-of-state preparatory high school does not agree to submit copies of official transcripts for all diploma eligible students in the relevant class to the Commission on Higher Education, or the high school does not agree to convert the grades for all students in the relevant class to the SC Uniform Grading Scale, the student must:
 - a.) Qualify for the LIFE Scholarship using the minimum 3.00 cumulative GPA and minimum 1100 SAT/24 ACT score eligibility requirements; or
 - b.) Qualify for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship using the minimum 4.00 cumulative GPA and minimum 1400 SAT/32 ACT score eligibility requirements.
4. If official copies of high school transcripts cannot be obtained from the high school for grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale, then the student must earn eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship by earning a minimum 3.0 LIFE GPA and 30 credit hours by the end of each academic year at an eligible institution to be awarded the LIFE Scholarship the next academic year.

5. If official copies of high school transcripts cannot be obtained from the high school for grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale, then the student cannot be awarded the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship or SC HOPE Scholarship.

I. Commission on Higher Education staff will convert grades to the SC Uniform Grading Scale for GPA and class rank requirements for SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility for all students that are South Carolina residents enrolled in out-of-state preparatory high schools. To meet all eligibility requirements, home schooled students must have grades converted to the Uniform Grading Scale by the approved home school association to which they are a member. If a student is a member of an approved home school association that ranks, a ranking report must be attached to the official transcript. Commission staff will not convert grades or class rank to the Uniform Grading Scale for home schooled students.

J. All files and documentation for conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale must be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education.

K. The staff member appointed by the Commission on Higher Education will notify the student of the Uniform Grading Scale conversion results. Institutions will also be notified of the results.

L. Grade point averages (GPA) must be based on the Uniform Grading Scale, reported with at least two decimal places, and may not be rounded up. Official copies of transcripts must be submitted by the high school.

M. Class ranks must be based on the Uniform Grading Scale and grades for all diploma eligible students in the relevant class. The out-of state high school must agree to submit official copies of transcripts to the Commission on High Education or the high school must agree to perform SC Uniform Grading Scale conversions (see, SC Uniform Grading Scale Conversion Process Section H.1-5 above).

N. Any fees and requirements associated with the grade and class rank conversions are the sole responsibility of the student. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria, including South Carolina residency requirements.

O. Institutions are responsible for determining students' eligibility for the LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships based on Uniform Grading Scale conversions, and for notifying students about financial aid awards through normal institutional notification procedures. Institutions must follow all requirements as established by state statute and regulation for the LIFE and SC HOPE Scholarships.

P. The Commission on Higher Education will determine all students' eligibility for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, and will notify students and institutions of the results as established by state statute and regulation for the Scholarship.

Q. Each student awarded the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE or SC HOPE Scholarships must make himself or herself aware of the institutional notification process and his or her Scholarship eligibility.

R. The Commission and the institution must retain annual paper or electronic documentation for each award to include at a minimum:

1. Completed Scholarship Grade Conversion Form
2. High school transcript(s)

3. Uniform Grading Scale conversion results
4. Award notification
5. Institutional disbursement to student
6. Student's residency status
7. Refunds and repayments (if appropriate)
8. Enrollment and curriculum requirements
9. Verification of a 3.0 "LIFE GPA" and the required number of annual credit hours based on initial college enrollment
10. Affidavit documenting that the student: a) has never been convicted of any felonies and/or any alcohol/ drug-related misdemeanor offenses within the past academic year; b) understands that non-degree credit hours will not be used in calculating the "LIFE GPA" or credit hour requirements if they are enrolled in an associate's degree or higher; and c) must certify that they have submitted transcripts from all previous and current institutions attended
11. Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) or affidavit documenting that the student is not in default or does not owe a refund or repayment on any state or federal financial aid
12. High school transcript(s) verifying graduation or home school completion date, grade point averages and class ranks (first-time entering freshmen) or GED or Adult Education High School Diploma,
13. SAT or ACT scores (first-time entering freshmen)
14. Verification of student's disability from Institutional Disability Service Provider and verification of reduced course-load requirement (if appropriate)
15. Military mobilization orders (if appropriate)

S. Students and institutions must comply with all requirements as established in state statute and regulation for the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and SC HOPE Scholarships.

T. In the event that a student is found to be ineligible for a scholarship, the student must contact the Commission on Higher Education. If the student requests that the Commission on High Education repeats the Uniform Grading Scale conversion process, then the student must submit full payment and fees again to the Commission for the Uniform Grading Scale conversions. The Commission reserves the right to grant or deny requests for additional (i.e., repeat) grade conversions to the Uniform Grading Scale. The decision of the Commission on Higher Education is final.

U. It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that only eligible students receive a Scholarship award.

V. Completion of the Scholarship Grade Conversion Form or participation in the SC Uniform Grading Scale Conversion Process does not guarantee that students will be awarded a Palmetto Fellows, LIFE or SC HOPE Scholarship.

W. Any student who has attempted to obtain or has obtained a Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, or SC HOPE Scholarship award through means of a willfully false statement or failure to reveal any material fact, condition, or circumstances affecting eligibility will be subject to applicable civil or criminal penalties, including loss of the Scholarship.

X. The staff appointed by the Commission on Higher Education to convert grades to the SC Uniform Grading Scale is not responsible for verifying the student's South Carolina residency.

Payments and Refunds

A. Any fees and requirements associated with the SC Uniform Grading Scale Conversion Process are the sole responsibility of the student. Full payment is required prior to all Uniform Grading Scale conversions. These students must meet all other eligibility criteria, including South Carolina residency requirements.

B. No refunds will be given for payments made for conversions to the SC Uniform Grading Scale.

C. In the event that a student is awarded a Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, or SC HOPE Scholarship in error, institutions must reimburse the Commission on Higher Education for the amount of the Scholarship award for the term in question pursuant to the refund policies of the institution. Collection is the responsibility of the institution.

D. In the event a student who has been awarded a Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, or SC HOPE Scholarship withdraws, is suspended from the institution, or drops below full-time enrollment status during any term of the academic year, institutions must reimburse the Commission on Higher Education for the amount of the Scholarship award for the term in question pursuant to the refund policies of the institution. Collection is the responsibility of the institution.

E. In the event a student withdraws or drops below full-time status after the institution's refund period and therefore must pay tuition and fees for full-time enrollment, the scholarship may be retained pursuant to the refund policies of the institution.

Suspension or Termination of Institutional Participation

A. The Commission may review institutional administrative practices to determine institutional compliance with pertinent statutes, guidelines, rules or regulations. If such a review determines that an institution has failed to comply with program statutes, guidelines, rules or regulations, the Commission may suspend, terminate, or place certain conditions upon the institution's continued participation in the program and require reimbursement to the Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and SC HOPE Scholarship programs for any funds lost or improperly awarded.

B. Upon receipt of evidence that an institution has failed to comply, the Commission on Higher Education shall notify the institution in writing of the nature of such allegations and conduct an audit.

C. If an audit indicates that a violation or violations may have occurred or are occurring at any eligible public or independent institution, the Commission on Higher Education shall secure immediate reimbursement from the institution in the event that any funds were expended out of compliance with the provisions of the Act, any relevant statutes, guidelines, rules, and regulations.

Statement of Rationale: The SC Commission on Higher Education reserves the authority to make revisions to this regulation that are necessary and proper to be consistent with state laws.