



SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows
Scholarship Programs

Guidelines for Appeal
2009-10

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. The student is also notified by CHE that his/her Scholarship was discontinued.

Student obtains an Application for Appeal from the Commission on Higher Education's Web site at:
<http://www.che.sc.gov/StudentServices/Appeals/AppealsHm.htm>
or by calling 1-877-349-7183.

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 5-6);
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 5:00pm on Thursday, October 1st 2009; and
5. All documentation must be received at the Commission on Higher Education by no later than 5:00pm on **October 1st 2009** for the appeal to be considered.

The Commission on Higher Education will review all **COMPLETE** SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship appeals packets received by no later than 5:00pm on the October 1st deadline. 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.

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 Programs 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. Also note that 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 the Commission on Higher Education's Web site at <http://www.che.sc.gov/StudentServices/Appeals/AppealsHm.htm>.

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 the Commission on Higher Education's Web site at <http://www.che.sc.gov/StudentServices/Appeals/AppealsHm.htm>.

Institutions must submit an electronic roster (either Excel or ASCII format) of all students who do not meet the continued eligibility requirements to the Commission on Higher Education. The roster shall include the name, social security number, and permanent home address for each student. The Commission must receive the roster no later than two weeks after the completion of summer school.

The Commission will notify each Palmetto Fellow in writing 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. If you wish to submit an appeal, please contact your financial aid office for the appeals brochure or you may also access the appeals information on our website at www.che.sc.gov. Appeals must be submitted by the **first** October deadline in which you re-enroll in college after losing eligibility for a state scholarship. For this academic year, your appeals information must be received by the Commission by no later than 5:00 pm on **October 1, 2009. No appeals applications will be accepted after 5:00 pm on October 1, 2009.**

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/StudentServices/Appeals/AppealsHm.htm>.
- 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 courseload for the academic year in question.
- 3) **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 are 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.**
- 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 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.
- 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 at the beginning of each academic year, 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, ect.). 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) Hospital invoice and/or insurance statements;
- 3) 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;
- 4) 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) Death certificate;
- 2) Newspaper obituary;
- 3) Funeral program; and/or
- 4) Letter from counselor.

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 institutions attended, including dual enrollment coursework. 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, 1333 Main Street, Suite 200, Columbia, SC 29201 or be included with the Application for Appeal. 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 October 1, 2009.

Submission of Application for Appeal

- 1) The completed application and all other documentation must be received by the Commission on Higher Education by **October 1st** 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.

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. No requests for re-appeal will be accepted after 5:00 pm on November 20, 2009. If the student has filed an appeal, and has yet to receive notification of a decision by November 20, 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 20th deadline. Decisions should be rendered by January 1st. **The Appeals Committee's decision is final.**

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 will 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: October 1, 2009

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: _____

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 [] Other

2. Extenuating Circumstance: ___ Serious health condition of the student
___ Death or serious health condition of an immediate family member
___ Traumatic/Extraordinary Event

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 any previous institutions attended; and
5. All documents must be received at the Commission on Higher Education no later than 5:00 pm on October 1, 2009.
6. Incomplete appeals documents and files will not be considered.

IT IS THE STUDENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ENSURE THAT ALL DOCUMENTS ARE RECEIVED BY OCTOBER 1, 2009. 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 October 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 requests for re-appeal will be accepted after November 20, 2009. 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 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 are 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.)*

Transcripts

Did you send or request for transcripts to be sent for all of the colleges/universities you have attended (including transcripts for any courses you took in high school where you received college credit)? Is each transcript in an official, sealed envelope from the institution? Have they been delivered to the Commission by the October deadline?