



April 4, 2006

MEMORANDUM

To: Director of Financial Aid, Director of Admissions, and Dean of Enrollment
LIFE Scholarship Eligible Institutions

From: Dr. Karen Woodfaulk, Director of Student Services Division

Subject: Study Abroad Programs and the LIFE GPA

Purpose

Through a directive, the Commission originally notified institutions on June 16, 2005, about how to calculate the LIFE GPA for the awarding of the LIFE Scholarship. Then, during Summer and Fall Terms of 2005, the Commission, in conjunction with institutional representatives, reviewed the LIFE Scholarship regulation and made proposed amendments that were forwarded to the Commission on Higher Education for approval. The proposed regulation was approved by the Commission on October 6, 2005, and forwarded to the General Assembly for their review on December 8, 2005. The proposed regulation for the LIFE Scholarship was passed by the General Assembly on March 23, 2006, and signed by the Governor on March 24, 2006.

Because a question arose concerning how to incorporate study abroad credits into the LIFE GPA, staff contacted a few institutions in the state, to determine how institutions were applying grades and credit hours earned by students in study abroad programs. We have discovered that there is some ambiguity in how institutions are applying either the directive and/or the regulation for the LIFE Scholarship as they relate to student participation in study abroad programs and the calculation of the LIFE GPA. Therefore, we are providing the following information, in an effort to provide some clarity and guidance on how to calculate the LIFE GPA and total credit hours earned from this point forward:

LIFE Scholarship GPA:

During the 2005 Legislative Session the General Assembly approved H.3906. According to H. 3906 and the regulation for the LIFE Scholarship, students must earn a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) based on grades earned at all eligible public or independent institutions attended for the purposes of determining LIFE Scholarship eligibility. Beginning with the 2006-07 academic year, LIFE Scholarship eligibility must be automatically calculated according to H. 3906 and the regulation for the LIFE Scholarship for all students. The LIFE GPA must include all grades earned at any eligible institution (in-state and out-of-state), including courses that do not transfer based on the institution's policy and college courses taken while in high school. The "LIFE GPA" must not include continuing education courses, non-degree credit courses for an associate degree or higher and remedial/developmental courses.

Calculating the LIFE GPA:

- 1) Convert all grades earned at an eligible institution to a 4.0 scale based on each institution's grading policy where the grades were earned = grade points
- 2) Multiply the Grade Points by Attempted Credit Hours = Quality Points (QP)
- 3) Divide the total quality points by the total number of attempted credit hours = LIFE GPA
- 4) LIFE GPA Formula:
$$\frac{\text{Grade Points X Attempted Credited Hours} = \text{QP}}{\text{Total Attempted Credit Hours}} = \text{LIFE GPA}$$

Study Abroad Programs & the LIFE GPA

1. Eligible Institution:

According to the regulation for the LIFE Scholarship, "the LIFE GPA includes all credit hours and grades earned at all eligible institutions (in-state or out-of-state). The Commission on Higher Education defines an "eligible institution" as an accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2005-06 academic year only, institutions were permitted to define an eligible institution as a "regionally" accredited public or independent institution (in-state, out-of-state, or an institution from which transfer credit is accepted) or an accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (in-state or out-of-state). However, beginning with the 2006-07 academic year, a school must be an accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education to be considered as an "eligible institution" for the purposes of the LIFE GPA.

2. Transferable Credit Hours:

According to the regulation for the LIFE Scholarship, "the LIFE GPA must include all grades earned at any eligible institution, including courses that do not transfer based on

the institution's policy and college courses taken while in high school." This means that all grades and credit hours that a student has earned at all eligible institutions must be included in the calculation of the LIFE GPA. This includes all credit hours and grades earned for courses that do not transfer based on your institution's policy. If the college courses were taken by a student at an accredited institution recognized by the U.S. Department of Education (i.e., eligible institution), then the grades and credit hours earned at the eligible institution (including those courses that are not accepted by your institution as transfer credit) must be included in the calculation of the LIFE GPA for the student.

3. Study Abroad Programs:

Since the U.S. Department of Education only recognizes schools located in the United States, institutions located in other countries will not be considered as "eligible institutions." Thus, if a student is enrolled in a study abroad program, only the grades and credit hours that are transferred back to an accredited U.S. institution that is recognized by the U.S. Department of Education should be included in the calculation of the LIFE GPA. Any credit hours and grades that do not transfer back to an eligible U.S. institution should not be included in the calculation of the LIFE GPA. The LIFE GPA must include all credit hours and grades earned in study abroad programs that **transfer back to an "eligible institution."**

For further clarification, we provide the following example: If a student was previously enrolled at the University of Georgia and is now currently enrolled at Winthrop University, all grades and credit hours that the student earned at both Winthrop and the University of Georgia should be included in the calculation of the LIFE GPA, including credit hours earned at the University of Georgia that did not transfer to Winthrop. While at Winthrop, if the student enrolls in a study abroad program at the University of Northampton located in the United Kingdom (UK), only the courses that Winthrop accepts as transfer credit hours should be included in the calculation of the LIFE GPA and total credit hours earned. However, the grades and credit hours of any courses earned at Northampton that do not transfer back to Winthrop should not be included in the LIFE GPA or total credit hours earned.

On the other hand, if the student participated in a study abroad program during their time at the University of Georgia and the institution accepted courses taken as transfer credit hours, then Winthrop must include all of the grades and credit hours earned by the student in the study abroad program that were accepted by the University of Georgia as transfer credit hours in the LIFE GPA and total credit hours earned. In addition, the LIFE GPA would also include any transfer credit hours accepted by the University of Georgia in the study abroad program that Winthrop did not accept as transfer credit hours when the student enrolled at the institution. Therefore, the LIFE GPA must include all grades and credit hours earned in a study abroad program that transfers back to any eligible institution, including courses that do not transfer based on the current institution's policy.

The calculation of the LIFE GPA for the awarding of the LIFE Scholarship must include the following:

- All credit hours and grades earned in high school while in a dual enrollment program at an eligible institution;
- All credit hours and grades earned at in-state eligible institutions;
- All credit hours and grades earned at out-of-state eligible institutions; and
- All credit hours and grades earned in study abroad programs that transfer back to any U.S. eligible institutions.

Questions

If you have any questions, concerns or need clarification regarding this directive, please contact the following personnel:

- 1) Dr. Tajuana Massie, LIFE Scholarship Manager, (803) 737-2271 or tmassie@che.sc.gov,
- 2) Ms. Sherry Hubbard, Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Manager, (803) 737-2262 or shubbard@che.sc.gov, or
- 3) Dr. Karen Woodfaulk, Director of Student Services, (803) 737-2244 or kwoodfaulk@che.sc.gov.

Links Concerning LIFE GPA:

- <http://www.che.sc.gov/StudentServices/LIFE/Directives.htm>
- <http://www.che.sc.gov/StudentServices/LIFE/GPAReq.htm>