



Council for Lifelong Learning

Bright Futures Scholarship Program - Florida Merit Scholars Award

Fact
Sheet

September 2001

1. What is the Merit Scholars Award?	The Florida Merit Scholars Award is one of three awards available to Florida high school graduates through the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. (See the Bright Futures Scholarship Program Fact Sheet.)
2. What is the award amount?	A student who attends a public institution is eligible for an award equal to the amount required to pay 75 percent of matriculation and fees (including lab fees up to \$300 per semester). A student who attends a nonpublic institution is eligible for an award equal to the amount that would be required to pay for 75 percent of the average matriculation and fees of a public postsecondary education institution at the comparable level.
3. What are the specific eligibility requirements for the Florida Merit Scholars Award?	In addition to meeting the general eligibility criteria for a Bright Futures Award, a student must meet the following criteria to be considered for a Merit Scholars Award: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• achieve a 3.0 weighted GPA using the 15 core credits required for admission to a state university, and• score a 970 SAT or 20 ACT (best composite score). (See the Bright Futures Scholarship Program Fact Sheet.) Note: Specific eligibility criteria may vary for students graduating in or before 1999. Contact high school guidance counselor or check the Department of Education website with a link to Bright Futures. (See Question 9)
4. What are the 15 core credits on which the GPA calculation is based?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 4 English (3 with substantial writing)• 3 Mathematics (Algebra I and above)• 3 Natural Science (2 with substantial lab)• 3 Social Science (any)• 2 Foreign Language (in the same language) A student may use up to 4 additional credits from courses in the academic areas listed above and/or AP or IB fine arts courses to raise his or her GPA.
5. How are courses weighted for the GPA calculation?	Current law requires the weighting of grades earned in selected courses for purposes of calculating the GPA used to determine eligibility for a Bright Futures award. Additional weight, of no more than 0.5 points per course, is

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	<p>given to the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • courses identified in the course code directory as AP, Pre-IB, or IB; • courses designated as academic dual enrollment courses in the statewide course numbering system; and • other courses identified by the Articulation Coordinating Committee as containing rigorous academic and performance standards. <p>For example, if a student earns an "A" in a regular course, 4.0 quality points are awarded. If the 'A' is earned in a course in one of the above categories, 4.5 quality points are awarded, thus giving additional weight to more rigorous courses.</p>
<p>6. Are there other ways to qualify for a Merit Scholars Award?</p>	<p>Yes. A student who falls into one of the following categories may qualify for a Merit Scholars Award:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National Merit or Achievement Scholars and Finalists and National Hispanic Scholars who have not completed 75 hours of community service; • student has completed the IB Curriculum and scores a 970 SAT or 20 ACT; • student has attended a home education program during grades 11 and 12 and scores a 1070 SAT or 23 ACT; • GED with best composite score of 970 SAT or 20 ACT and a 3.0 weighted GPA in the 15 core credits; • early admissions with best composite score of 970 SAT or 20 ACT and a 3.0 weighted GPA in curriculum courses completed.
<p>7. What are the renewal criteria for a Merit Scholars Award?</p>	<p>To renew the Merit Scholars Award, a student must earn a 2.75 cumulative GPA and six credit hours per semester funded.</p>
<p>8. What are the applicable statutes and rules?</p>	<p>Sections 240.4015 - 240.40209, F.S. -- Bright Futures Scholarship Program</p>
<p>9. Where can I get additional information?</p>	<p>Department of Education Bureau of Student Financial Assistance (850) 410-5200 Student Hot Line: 1-888-827-2004 (toll-free) www.firn.edu/doe/bsfa</p> <p>The Florida House of Representatives Committee on Colleges & Universities (850) 488-3711</p>