

Educational Aide Exemption Program Frequently Asked Questions

NOTE: Effective for 2011-2012/2012-2013 academic years, funding for making awards for Ed Aide exemptions is no longer available. However, institutions, if they choose to do so, may continue making Ed Aide awards at their own expense. There will be no reimbursements from the Coordinating Board. Before submitting an application for Ed Aide, students should check with their institution to verify whether or not the institution will honor the exemption.

1. Are remedial courses covered by the exemption?

Yes.

2. Are class and laboratory fees covered by the exemption?

No, only mandatory fees are covered by the exemption.

3. Does a student have to submit a FAFSA in order to be eligible for the exemption?

No, FAFSA submission is not required in order to be considered eligible for the exemption. However, it is to the benefit of the student to submit a FAFSA, as it enables the institution to determine eligibility for additional aid.

4. Is a student who has defaulted on a loan eligible to receive the exemption?

Yes, as long the student is otherwise eligible.

5. If a student is receives a loan(s), does this affect his or her eligibility for the exemption?

No.

6. How does an institution determine if a student is taking classes leading to teacher certification?

If a student is attending a junior college, he or she must provide a written statement of his/her intent to enroll in a teacher certification program at a university or college. If a student is attending a university, he or she must be enrolled in a teacher certification program.

7. If a student received his or her first award *prior* to earning a Bachelor's degree, is the student eligible to be exempt from student teaching?

Yes.

8. If a student received his/her first award *after* earning a Bachelor's degree, is the student eligible to be exempt from student teaching?

No.

9. Who determines eligibility, the institution or the Coordinating Board?

The institution determines eligibility. The Coordinating Board no longer determines eligibility.

11. If the legislature authorizes program funding in the future, what are the procedures for requesting a reimbursement from the Coordinating Board?

Once the institution has determined students' eligibility, a Request for Reimbursement Form (RFR) must be submitted to the Coordinating Board. The RFR will be processed, and the institutional Reporting Officer will receive an email notification from the CB including the student roster and amount.

12. Do all students who apply receive the exemption?

No. Ed Aide exemptions are granted based on students' eligibility and the availability of adequate funding.

13. Who is authorized to sign Part II (employment verification) of the application?

Part II must be signed by an authorized school official, such as: the Principal, Personnel Director or Superintendent. By signing Part II, the school official is certifying the aide's required year of employment or the substitute teacher's 180 days of employment.

14. Are there a certain number of hours in which the student must be enrolled?

No. However, the student must be employed and enrolled in classes leading to teacher certification while receiving the exemption.

15. What is the definition of the term "educational aide?"

An "educational aide" is a person who has been employed by a public school district in Texas in a teaching capacity, working in the classroom directly with the students for at least one -year on a full-time basis. Aides include substitute teachers who have been employed by a public school district in Texas for 180 or more full days in a teaching capacity, working in the classroom directly with students.

16. How does an institution determine a student's recommended award by utilizing the Adjusted Gross Income method?

To calculate a student's award amount using the AGI method, the institution will use a standard income scale, which is subject to change annually. For the school year, 2011-2012, the following income levels apply:

Single independent student – AGI must be \$31,520 or less.

Married independent student – AGI must be \$63,042 or less.

Dependent student – AGI must be \$63,042 or less including student and family AGI.

17. Is the Building Use Fee covered under this exemption?

Yes.

18. When must the one -year of educational aid experience be completed?

The student must have one school year of full-time educational aide experience during the five years preceding the term or semester for which the student is awarded the initial exemption. Summer is not included.

19. What if a student received the exemption, but was found to be ineligible?

If a student is found to be ineligible after receiving his or her Ed Aide award, the funds must be returned to the CB within 10 days (if applicable), or to the institution (if using institutional funds).

20. Will institutions be notified if a student is eligible to receive the exemption during the Spring term?

No. Each November, the institution must request employment verification from the school district in order to verify eligibility for the spring term.

21. Are students who are enrolled in mini-sessions eligible for the exemption?

Yes. The award will be based on the term in which the mini session is included. For example, if a student is enrolled over the Christmas holiday, the award would be based on the fall certification. If the student is enrolled over spring break, the award would be based on the spring certification.

22. What happens if a student drops hours or withdraws after an institution has already received the reimbursement?

The student will be subject to the institution's withdrawal policy.

23. What if a student applies for the exemption but has no calculated need?

If a student shows no need via the FAFSA or the Adjusted Gross Income calculation, the student is not eligible to participate in the program.

24. Is a student who is concurrently enrolled in two institutions eligible for the exemption?

Yes. A separate application must be submitted to each college.

25. If a student did not make satisfactory academic progress in the fall, but does so in the spring, is he or she eligible for the spring term?

No. A student must have made satisfactory academic progress in the fall to be eligible for the spring term.

26. Must a student re-apply every semester?

No, but a student must re-apply each year. A separate application is required for the summer term.

27. Which institutions are eligible to participate?

All Texas public institutions of higher education are eligible to participate in the Ed Aide Exemption program

28. Are correspondence courses covered by the exemption?

Correspondence courses are covered if:

1. the correspondence course is one for which the school receives formula funding from the state;
2. the course is a part of the student's curriculum for becoming a teacher; and
3. the college can derive a valid financial need calculation for the student.

29. Is there an application for the Educational Aide Exemption?

Yes, Completed applications must be submitted to the institution by the institution's deadline date. Students should check with their institution for more information.

30. Which income tax form is used for the Adjusted Gross Income (AGI) method?

If the AGI method is used, the institution will use the AGI from the current year's tax return.

31. Are substitute teachers eligible to participate in the program?

Yes, if applying as a substitute teacher, the student must have 180 full days of service working in the classroom as a substitute prior to the semester for which the student is to be awarded.

32. Does the Business/ Co-op program count towards the one year of educational aide experience for the educational aide program?

No.

33. Are school bus drivers eligible to participate?

Yes, provided the school bus driver has acquired one school year of educational aide experience within the past 5 years or 180 full days of service as a substitute teacher working in the classroom.

34. Is a volunteer in a school district eligible to participate?

No. The applicant must be employed with a school or school district.

35. Are students enrolled in Alternative Certification Programs eligible to participate in the program?

Yes, but only if the institution receives formula funding (tax support) for the hours in which the student is enrolled.

36. Do Texas private institutions of higher education grant these exemptions?

No. The exemption is for eligible Texas public community colleges and Texas public universities only.

37. Is a student who is unemployed eligible to participate in the program?

No. The individual must be employed by a Texas public school district for the full term in which the exemption of tuition and fees is received.

38. What is a hardship waiver?

If a student was employed at the beginning of the relevant term, but was unable to remain employed throughout the term for reasons beyond his/her control, the student might be eligible for a hardship waiver during that specific term. Such situations include, but are not limited to, the following:

- (1) a severe illness or other debilitating condition that may affect the individual's ability to continue employment,
- (2) responsibility for the care of a temporarily disabled dependent that may affect the recipient's ability to continue employment, or
- (3) performance of active duty military service.

39. If a student obtains one school year of full-time educational experience outside the State of Texas, does the experience apply for the exemption?

No. Program rules require a student to be employed by a public school district in Texas in a teaching, capacity working in the classroom directly with students for at least one year on a full-time basis.

40. Are substitute teachers included on the substitute teacher list eligible?

Yes. The substitute teacher must accept substitute teaching assignments during the term for which the exemption is received, as well as meet all of the eligibility requirements.

41. If a student is employed with a Texas public school district, but not currently working, is the student eligible for the exemption?

No. In order to be eligible, the student must be employed.

42. If a student pays out of pocket for tuition and fees, can the student still receive the exemption after the fact, and therefore be exempt from student teaching?

Yes, if for some unforeseen circumstances the student's Ed Aide award is delayed, the institution can reimburse the student's out of pocket expenses. As long as the student receives an Ed Aide award, he/she would be eligible to be exempt from student teaching.