

Prior law provided for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) as a program of merit scholarships for students attending certain postsecondary education institutions who meet specific grade point average, ACT score, and core curriculum requirements and certain other qualifications. Provided that eligible students may use TOPS to pursue an academic undergraduate degree or skill or occupational training as defined by the Bd. of Regents. New law retains prior law but provides that the program's administering agency (La. Office of Student Financial Assistance or LOSFA) rather than the Bd. of Regents shall define such skill or occupational training for which students may use TOPS.

Prior law required the minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) required for a student to be eligible for an Opportunity, Performance, or Honors award to be calculated using only the grades obtained in TOPS core curriculum courses. Provided that, beginning with students graduating in 2017-18, the TOPS GPA calculation shall utilize a five-point scale for grades earned in certain Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), gifted, and dual enrollment courses as approved by the Bd. of Regents and the State Bd. of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE). Further provides that for such courses, five quality points shall be assigned to an "A", four to a "B", three to a "C", two to a "D", and zero to an "F". New law retains prior law and additionally includes honors courses and articulated courses for college credit among those for which TOPS GPA calculation shall use a five-point scale.

Prior law provided for the following with respect to the high school core curriculum a student must complete to be eligible for TOPS:

- (1) 19 units of specified coursework for students graduating in 2013-14 through 2016-17.
- (2) 19 units of specified but different coursework for students graduating in 2017-18 and beyond.

Prior law allowed students to qualify for TOPS-Tech by completing the core curriculum in (1) or a core curriculum specifically provided for TOPS-Tech. Prior law added the core curriculum in (2) as an option for such students.

Prior law required LOSFA to provide for certain guidelines and procedures by rule, including those for which LOSFA, subject to BESE approval, may update names and establish equivalencies for TOPS core curriculum courses. New law specifically includes AP and IB courses as prescribed by the College Bd. or the IB Foundation among those for which LOSFA may do this.

Effective upon signature of governor (June 19, 2014).

(Amends R.S. 17:3048.1(A)(1)(intro para), (b)(ii)(bb), (c)(ii)(bb), and (d)(ii)(bb), (B)(2)(c)(intro para), and (C)(2)(e))