

**Massachusetts Assistance For Student Success
Program**

XX. National Guard Fee Assistance Program

**CHAPTER 130 OF THE ACTS OF 2005
TUITION AND FEE WAIVER PROGRAM
MASSACHUSETTS NATIONAL GUARD MEMBERS**

PURPOSE:

In November 2005, the Massachusetts Legislature enacted and the Governor signed "An Act Providing Benefits to Service Members, Veterans and Their Families" (Chapter 130 of the Acts of 2005). This law, in Section 2A, provides for tuition and fee waivers for members of the Massachusetts National Guard who choose to attend a Massachusetts public institution of higher education and it requires the Board of Higher Education to establish guidelines for these waivers. Section 2A also states "The Commonwealth, not the institutions of public higher education, shall bear the cost of such tuition and fee waivers for Massachusetts National Guard members."

DEFINITIONS:

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION

An institution within the system of public institutions of higher education as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM

An undergraduate or graduate degree program offered by an eligible institution.

ELIGIBLE STUDENT

An active member of the Massachusetts Army or Air National Guard who is in good standing and meets the following criteria:

- a) is accepted for admission to, or is enrolled, full- or part-time in a Massachusetts public institution of higher education, as defined above
- b) is eligible to receive and has been issued a Certificate of Eligibility by the Military Division of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts applicable for any portion of the academic year
- c) has not exceeded the 130 semester credit hours maximum, or the equivalent quarter hours or clock hours, when combined with Certificates of Eligibility issued prior to September 1, 2006
- d) maintains satisfactory academic progress as defined by the institution

MAINTENANCE OF ELIGIBILITY

It is the responsibility of each National Guard member to maintain his/her eligibility for educational assistance during the life of each Certificate of Eligibility. The member is also responsible for providing the Certificate of Eligibility to the proper official at the institution, as designated, and in a timely manner to facilitate awarding of the waivers.

It is the responsibility of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Military Division to inform the institution of the status of any member of the National Guard who has failed to maintain good standing or has terminated his/her service. Upon receipt of this information, the institution must determine if the award may be canceled for that academic term or for such future terms to follow.

AWARD VALUE

Subject to a special appropriation for this program, the value of the award under this program shall be equal to the amount of tuition and mandatory fees, as defined by each institution, charged to the student. The total

number of credits for which tuition and fees are waived may not exceed the number of credits for which the student is eligible, as indicated and based on the Certificate of Eligibility.

The institution must maintain and record the number of credits for which tuition and fees have been waived for each student to avoid overpayment.

AWARD PROCEDURE

Upon presentation of a valid Certificate of Eligibility (certificate must bear a raised seal), the institution will credit the student's account for the value of tuition and fees charged.

The institution shall present to the Board of Higher Education, or its designated agency, an invoice for reimbursement of all tuition and fees waived under this program at the conclusion of each academic semester. The invoice must be accompanied by a roster which provides the relevant information for each recipient to include: name, educational level, number of credits, and amount of tuition and fees waived.

REPORTS

Each institution shall maintain a record of tuition and fees waived under this program and provide a written report to the Board of Higher Education each semester, upon request. The terms of the report shall be specified by the Board of Higher Education and shall include the name of each participating National Guard member, the number of credits charged and the amount of each award.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Military Division shall be responsible for maintaining a log of all eligible National Guard members and providing a written report detailing the number certificates issued bi-annually.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS

All institutions must file a State Financial Aid Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the State Office of Student Financial Assistance.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the National Guard Tuition and Fee Waiver awarded under the terms of The Welcome Home Bill.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each campus to furnish annually to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the National Guard Tuition and Fee Waiver Program. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will coordinate specification and procedures for this report.
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Commissioner, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for seven years. An institution may retain such records for a period of five years if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.