

## **Part-Time Grant**

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### **BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance**

## **PURPOSE**

Demographic changes impacting current and future student populations have a direct relationship to the number of part-time students who seek higher education. In Massachusetts, as in other states, the number of part-time students is expected to continue to grow due to shifts in the state's demographic and economic circumstances, thus requiring more adults to return to the classroom on a part-time basis. Rapidly increasing college costs have forced students to reconsider their college enrollment plans. More and more, part-time programs are becoming viable alternatives. As colleges continue to shift their financial aid programs towards the full-time population, part-time programs have become even less affordable. The Massachusetts Part-Time Grant Program serves as a bridge between higher education and the part-time student population.

## **DEFINITIONS**

- **Eligible Institution:**  
An eligible institution is defined as a public, private, independent, for-profit or nonprofit institution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized to offer undergraduate degrees or certificate programs. The institution must be accredited and eligible to participate in the Federal Title IV programs.
- **Eligible Program:**  
Any eligible degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution.

## **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible for the Part-time Grant, the student must:

- a) be enrolled at an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) (1) be a U.S. Citizen, permanent legal resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations and physically reside in Massachusetts for at least one year, as of the start of the enrolled term with an intent to remain in Massachusetts consistent with

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Board of Higher Education policy; or (2) have an approved eligibility status designated by the Board of Higher Education pursuant to Section 9 of Chapter 15A, as amended by Section 11 of Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023;

- c) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if ineligible to complete the FAFSA, then complete the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) annually;
- d) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- e) not be in default on any federal or state student loans or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid programs;
- f) not have earned a prior associate if enrolled at a community college, or a prior bachelor's degree (or the equivalent) if enrolled at a four-year college or university;
- g) enroll, as a matriculated student, on a part-time basis (minimum of 6 credits, or the equivalent) in an eligible undergraduate program of study leading to a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree; and
- h) meet satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards.

NOTE: The Office of Student Financial Assistance maintains an accommodation policy for students with disabilities. Grant awards may be prorated to accommodate the needs of students with disabilities who, with proper medical documentation, must enroll in fewer than six credits per academic term.

### **PART-TIME GRANT CONDITIONS**

- Disbursement of funds: Part-Time Grant funding is to be appropriated to participating institutions through a formula approved by the Commissioner of Higher Education.
- Part-Time Grant funds appropriated during an academic year must be committed to students by institutions and expended at the conclusion of the fiscal year.

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- The institution is required to report recipient, programmatic, and other data to the Department of Higher Education (DHE) upon request.
- Institutions shall facilitate access to on-campus support services to students who receive assistance under the Part-Time Grant program, to promote persistence in and completion of their program of study.
- The institution is responsible for verifying student eligibility, to include an accurate determination of whether the student has earned a prior associate or baccalaureate degree (or equivalent), which may include a signed affidavit from the student after all reasonable attempts were made by the student to access prior transcripts.

## INSTITUTIONAL ALLOCATIONS

- **Base Allocation:** Participation in the Part-Time Grant Program is optional. Part-Time Grant funds will be allocated based on a formula that considers a rolling three-year average of the institutions' Pell Grant Program expenditure for Part-Time Massachusetts resident **students**.
- **Supplemental Allocation:** Supplemental allocation may be granted to an eligible institution demonstrating the need for additional funds.
- **De-obligation/Reallocation:** Institutions must de-obligate any unused/uncommitted funds on or before December 1st of each year. Subject to the availability of **de-obligated** resources, the ~~Senior Deputy Commissioner for Access and of Student Financial Assistance~~ Massachusetts Department of Higher Education may re-allocate Part-Time Grant funds.

## STUDENT ELIGIBILITY BY ENROLLMENT INTENSITY AND DEGREE TYPE

Eligible students may be awarded Part-Time Grant funds as follows:

### Bachelor's Degree

Maximum of 7 years, 14 semesters for part-time (minimum of 6 enrolled credits per academic term)

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### Associate's Degree

Maximum of 5 years, 10 semesters for part-time (minimum of 6 enrolled credits per academic term)

### Certificate Program

Maximum of 8 semesters

## AWARD VALUE

Awards made under this program must be calculated based on the award schedule provided for part-time grants. Individual awards for an academic year may not exceed a student's demonstrated financial need.

NOTE: This Program does not preclude the institution from providing additional funds to meet the student's remaining need.

## INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS

One hundred percent of the funds allocated shall be used for awards to students. Funds must be awarded to students during the traditional academic year.

Unexpended/uncommitted funds shall be returned to the Board of Higher Education for reallocation to other institutions no later than December 1 of each year. All funds must be disbursed by June 30 **of each award year**.

## ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the Part-time Grant. Institutions that have signed an agreement to participate in the Massachusetts State financial aid programs are required to share data for all students with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) or its designee, and the Office of Student Financial Assistance for this purpose. The program may be evaluated annually to determine any immediate impact or to determine if adjustments are required for various processes, such as disbursement of funds.

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### **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

All institutions receiving funds under the Part-time Grant must have an active Massachusetts State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA).

### **AUDIT REQUIREMENT**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Part-Time Grant.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Part-Time Grant. OSFA will establish the timeline, specifications, 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 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.