

Guidelines: Firefighters Enrolled in Fire Science Courses



Student Financial Aid Programs
Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board

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FIREFIGHTERS ENROLLED IN FIRE SCIENCE COURSES

The Texas Higher Education Coordinating Board (THECB) Program Guidelines are intended to support institutions by highlighting requirements that appear in the Texas Education Code (TEC) and Title 21 of the Texas Administrative Code (TAC). When administering this program, institutions should always refer to the applicable statutes and rules. The information provided in this document is to be used solely as a resource and does not supersede the statute and/or rules for this program.

PROGRAM AUTHORITY AND PURPOSE ([19 TAC, SECTION 21.786](#))

The exemption for Firefighters Enrolled in Fire Science Courses is authorized by [TEC, Chapter 54, Subchapter D, Section 54.353](#). Rules establishing procedures to administer the subchapter can be found in [Title 19 of the TAC, Chapter 21, Subchapter Z](#). The Firefighters Enrolled in Fire Science Courses program provides an exemption from tuition and laboratory fees to eligible persons employed as firefighters by a political subdivision of the state of Texas or active members of an eligible organized volunteer fire department in this state.

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS ([19 TAC, SECTION 21.787](#))

Texas public institutions as defined in [TEC, Section 61.003\(8\)](#), are eligible to participate in the Firefighters Enrolled in Fire Science Courses program.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAMS AND COURSES ([19 TAC, SECTION 21.791](#))

This exemption applies only to courses that are part of a fire science degree or certificate program identified by the institution and compiled into [one uniform list](#) by the THECB. Courses that make up the general education core curriculum required for all degrees are *not covered* by this exemption, unless the courses are identified by the institution as being a part of the fire science curriculum.

ELIGIBILITY

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ([19 TAC, SECTION 21.789](#))

The institution will determine what documentation (e.g., proof of employment) is necessary to decide whether the student is eligible for the program.

DOCUMENTATION COLLECTED MUST PROVE THE FOLLOWING:

- Student is a paid firefighter who is employed by a political subdivision of the state of Texas, or that
- Student is an active member (and has been for at least one year) of an organized volunteer fire department participating in the Texas Emergency Services Retirement System or a retirement system established under the Texas Local Fire Fighters Retirement Act ([Article 6243e, Vernon's Texas Civil Statutes](#)), who holds:
 - an Accredited Advanced level of certification, or an equivalent successor certification, under the State Firemen's and Fire Marshals' Association of Texas volunteer certification program; or
 - a Phase V (Firefighter II) certification, or an equivalent successor certification, under the Texas Commission on Fire Protection's voluntary certification program under [Texas Government Code, Section 419.071](#).

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS:

- Must be enrolled in eligible courses that are a part of a [fire science degree or certificate program](#) included in the list posted by the THECB.
- Be registered with Selective Service or be exempt (see [Selective Service Statement Requirements](#)).

CONTINUATION OF ELIGIBILITY ([19 TAC, SECTION 21.789](#))

A student can continue to receive this exemption in subsequent semesters or terms if the student:

- Meets the institution's satisfactory academic progress (SAP) requirement for financial aid.

NOTE: A student who fails to meet the grade point average (GPA) to satisfy the institution's SAP requirement may have the ability to regain eligibility for this exemption if he or she meets the GPA requirement during an upcoming term or semester in which the exemption was not awarded. The student may also be granted a hardship **exception** by the institution.

DISCONTINUATION OF ELIGIBILITY

A student may **not** continue to receive this exemption in a subsequent semester or term if the student:

- Has enrolled in undergraduate hours considered to be excessive under [TEC, Section 54.2001\(a\)\(2\)](#).
- Has enrolled in graduate or doctoral hours considered to be excessive under [TEC, Section 61.059\(1\) or \(2\)](#).

NOTE: At the start of a semester or term, if an undergraduate student is attempting hours considered to be excessive, the student may continue to receive this exemption if he or she is granted a hardship **extension** by the institution. Graduate and doctoral hours do not qualify for a hardship extension.

HARDSHIP PROVISIONS ([19 TAC, SECTION 21.792](#))

Institutions must adopt a hardship policy that may grant a student an **exception** from meeting the GPA requirement to satisfy the institution's SAP, or an **extension** of eligibility for excess undergraduate hours, when a student has a showing of a hardship or other good cause, including:

- A showing of a severe illness or other debilitating condition that could affect the student's academic performance;
- An indication that the student is responsible for the care of a sick, injured, or needy person and that the student's provision of care could affect the student's academic performance;
- The student's active duty or other service in the United States armed forces or the student's active duty in the Texas National Guard; or
- Any other cause considered acceptable by the institution.

All hardship decisions must be documented in the student's record and be available for submission to the THECB, if requested.

AWARDING

Institutions **must exempt** the cost of tuition and laboratory fees for **eligible** fire science courses attempted by the student. Eligible courses are those for which an institution receives formula funding ([TEC, Section 54.2002](#)).

NOTE: Formula funding is defined as the method used to allocate appropriated sources of funds among institutions of higher education. Formula-funded courses are those that do not depend solely on student tuition and fees to cover their costs.

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBLE PROGRAMS

Institutions are responsible for reporting a list of fire science courses or programs that qualify for exemption directly to the THECB.

Institutions must ensure that all eligible programs are listed accurately.

To make changes to the programs on the fire science exemption list, email: AQW@thecb.state.tx.us.

Changes must be approved by the governing board of your institution.

The THECB will maintain the list of all degree programs covered by the Firefighters Enrolled in Fire Science Courses exemption on the College for All Texans website.

Public Universities	Exempted Fire Science Programs
Lamar University	BA, BS, BAAS-Political Science Master of Public Administration
Sam Houston State University	BAAS, Industrial Safety Master of Public Administration
Stephen F. Austin State University	BA, BS, BAAS-Public Administration Master of Public Administration
Sul Ross State University Administration	Master of Arts in Political Science – Public
Texas A&M International University	BSN, Nursing BS, Chemistry Master of Public Administration
Texas A&M University	Safety Engineering Certificate (MS, Safety Engineering)
Texas A&M University-Commerce	BS, Instructional Training and Design BS, Applied Arts and Sciences
Texas A&M University-San Antonio	BAAS, Fire & Emergency Services Administration
Texas Southern University	Respiratory Therapy Curriculum Environmental Health Curriculum BS, Public Affairs Master of Public Administration Doctor of Pharmacy Curriculum
Texas State University-San Marcos	Bachelor of Public Administration Master of Public Administration
Texas Tech University	Master of Public Administration
The University of Texas at Arlington	Master of Public Administration
The University of Texas at Dallas	PHD, Public Affairs BS, Public Affairs MPA, Public Affairs
The University of Texas at El Paso	MPA, Public Administration
The University of Texas at San Antonio	Bachelor of Public Administration Master of Public Administration

<http://www.thecb.state.tx.us/DocID/PDF/8739.PDF>



SELECTIVE SERVICE STATEMENT

Male students must be registered with or exempt from Selective Service (SS) in order to be eligible to receive federal or state financial assistance. In accordance with [TEC, Section 51.9095](#), male students must file the required **Selective Service Statement of Registration Status** (found below) with their institution or other entity granting or guaranteeing financial assistance. This includes grants, scholarships, loans, or other assistance funded by state revenue, including federal funds or gifts and grants accepted by the state.

When is the statement NOT Required?

- **When the SS registration is confirmed through the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR):** The ISIR confirmation serves as the student's official, signed statement because the Department of Education validates registration directly with the Selective Service System (SSS).
- **NEW** **When the SS registration is confirmed through the [SSS.gov website](#):** The institution can save the confirmation directly from the website to serve as the student's official, signed statement on record.
- **NEW** **When the ISIR confirms that a student is under the age of 18:** No statement or documentation is needed for the applicable award year, even if the student turns 18 during that year.

When is the statement REQUIRED, including all supporting documentation?

- When the student completes a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) but is flagged "not registered" on the ISIR and SS status **cannot** be confirmed on the [SSS.gov website](#).
- **NEW** **When the student completes a Texas Application for State Financial Aid (TASFA):** The required statement is embedded in the 2020-21 TASFA and must be completed by the student.
- **NEW** **When the student does not complete a FAFSA or TASFA but applies for state financial aid, such as through exemptions or waivers, and SS status cannot** be confirmed on the [SSS.gov website](#).

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

FREQUENCY COLLECTING THE STATEMENT

If the student's status will NOT change, the statement and supporting documentation can be used for subsequent semesters. (Example: The student entered the U.S. after the eligible age to register.)

If the student's status is temporary, the statement must be collected each academic year until the student is registered or determined exempt. (Example: Student is under age 18 but did not complete a FAFSA or TASFA.)

RETENTION SCHEDULE

The status statement and all documentation must be retained in the student's record for 7 years after the date of completion of the award period ([TEC, Section 441.1855](#)).

REPROCESSED ISIRS

If the student's most recent ISIR transaction has been reprocessed by the Central Processing System (CPS) and the registration with the SSS was confirmed, the institution does not need to collect the status statement or any documentation.

Institutions may collect the required status statement and documentation either electronically or on paper.
([English Statement](#) or [Spanish Statement](#))

SELECTIVE SERVICE STATEMENT OF REGISTRATION STATUS	
Male students must verify their current Selective Service registration status by marking one of the statements below and providing proof of their registration status to their current institution. Failure to do so may result in the loss of eligibility for state financial aid.	
_____ I am under the age of 18 and not currently required to register.	
_____ I am REGISTERED with the Selective Service and, <i>Check the following box that applies:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> I have already submitted proof of registration to my current institution. <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of registration is included with this statement. <input type="checkbox"/> I will submit proof of my registration. NOTE: Proof is required to be considered eligible for financial aid.	_____ I am EXEMPT from registration and, <i>Check the following box that applies:</i> <input type="checkbox"/> I have already submitted proof of my exemption to my current institution. <input type="checkbox"/> Proof of my exemption is included with this statement. <input type="checkbox"/> I will submit proof of my exemption. NOTE: Proof is required to be considered eligible for financial aid.
_____ I am over the age of 18. I am not registered with Selective Service and I am not exempt from registration with Selective Service.	
I, _____, hereby certify that the Selective Service status statement provided above is true and accurate.	
Student ID: _____	Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX 1: QUICK REFERENCES

CONTACT FINANCIAL AID SERVICES

By phone: (844) 792-2640

Contact us by completing an [online inquiry form](#) and select “Financial Aid Question” as the Contact Reason.

OTHER RESOURCES FOR INSTITUTIONS

To add, edit, or remove eligible fire science programs, email the request to the THECB.	AQW@theeb.state.tx.us
General program information for institutions	Student Financial Aid Programs Information Webpage
Texas Program Statutes	Texas Education Code
Texas Program Rules	Texas Administrative Code
Information concerning programs, procedures, allocations, and other topics will be communicated to institutions through the GovDelivery system. To receive these communications, interested individuals must subscribe.	GovDelivery
Federal Selective Service Requirement Guide	Who Must Register Chart