



EXCELSIOR SCHOLARSHIP FACT SHEET

The New York State Excelsior Scholarship is a state funded scholarship program designed to support full-time undergraduate students from working and middle income households who are on track for on-time degree completion. The Excelsior Scholarship is administered by Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC).

Eligibility:

To meet the initial eligibility criteria for the Excelsior Scholarship, an applicant must:

- be a NYS resident and have resided in NYS for 12 continuous months prior to the start of the term;
- be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen;
- have either graduated from a U.S. high school, earned a GED, or passed a federally approved “Ability to Benefit” test;
- be enrolled in an undergraduate degree program at SUNY or CUNY;
- not be in default on a state or federal student loan;
- have a family federal adjusted gross income (AGI) below the maximum limit:
 - \$100,000 for 2017-18 based on 2015 tax return
 - \$110,000 for 2018-19 based on 2016 tax return
 - \$125,000 for 2019-20 based on 2017 tax return

Requirements:

- Execute a HESC issued contract and comply with pre- and post-graduation terms and conditions.
- Enroll for a minimum of 12 credits per semester.
- Complete 30 credits per year (defined as 365 days)
- Remain continuously enrolled and on track for a 4-year graduation when enrolled in a 4-year degree program.
- Complete the FAFSA first each year. In the initial application year, also complete the TAP and Excelsior Applications at hesc.ny.gov. In subsequent years, complete the FAFSA and then the [Payment of State Grants, Scholarships and Awards Application](#) on the HESC web site.

Post-Graduation Residency Requirement:

- Recipients must live and work, if employed, in New York State for the same number of years that the Excelsior Scholarship was received. Failure to meet this requirement will result in the value of the award being converted to a zero-interest loan.

Awards:

- Awards vary and are subject to change.
- The maximum annual Excelsior Scholarship is \$5,500, however a tuition credit will be awarded to cover any gap between the maximum Excelsior Scholarship and the cost of annual tuition.
- Award cannot be applied to non-tuition costs, such as room and board.
- Excelsior is a “last dollar” award. That means that the value of the award is determined after subtracting other grants and scholarships, such as Pell and TAP, from the tuition cost. If the amount of grants and scholarships exceeds the cost of tuition, the Excelsior award will be zero.
- Excelsior Scholarships cannot be used for summer or winter session tuition costs.
- Students who fail to complete 30 credits within 365 days will receive the first payment (typically fall), however, they will forfeit the second payment (typically spring), and all future payments. The student will

be responsible for paying the tuition retroactively for the forfeited term if the 30 credits have not been completed at the end of the 365 days. In addition, all future payments will be forfeited.

Academics:

- Students must enroll for at least 12 credits per semester and complete 30 credits per year. Students are strongly encouraged to register for 15 credits per semester to maximize their ability to retain eligibility for the program and on-time graduation.
- Remedial courses do not count towards enrollment requirements for Excelsior purposes.
- AP/IB and other credits earned in high school can be “banked” and may be used to meet the annual 30 credit requirement.
- Only transfer credits accepted towards the New Paltz degree will count towards Excelsior requirements.
- Once eligibility is lost due to academic reasons, it cannot be regained.
- Students can use credits earned during winter or summer to meet the 30 credits per year requirement.
- Students who change their major may continue to receive Excelsior funding provided that the student remains on track for a 4-year graduation.
- Students are strongly encouraged to consult academic and financial aid advisors before withdrawing from classes, changing majors, or enrolling in courses that are not applicable to their degree.
- There is no specific GPA requirement for Excelsior, however students must remain in good academic standing.
- Double majors are allowed provided that graduation is not delayed.
- Repeat coursework can only count towards enrollment requirements if the previously received grade is inadequate for the requirements of the major.

Exceptions:

- Students designated as ADA are exempt from the standard enrollment requirements, however they are expected to complete all coursework attempted.
- EOP students must complete 24 credits per year and complete their degree within five years.
- Students who do not meet the continuous enrollment and completion of 30 credits per year requirements due to military service, documented medical issues or other significant circumstances, may appeal to HESC to retain eligibility.
- During the final semester of enrollment students must enroll for at least 12 credits, but only one course must be applicable toward their degree.
- There are exceptions to the post-graduation residency requirements for military service, graduate school attendance, and Peace Corp enrollment.

Miscellaneous:

- Excelsior recipients will have their tuition rate locked in at the 2016-17 rate through the 2020-21 academic year as long as they remain eligible for the award.
- Students may take advantage of the “catch up” provision for continuing students. Students who fell short of the 30 credits per year requirement by 6 or fewer credits in years prior to the start of the Excelsior Scholarship program may be able to use 2017-18 to catch up on the required credits and regain eligibility for the 2018-19 academic year.
- Students who are just applying for the Excelsior Scholarship for the second term of their academic year must have completed 15 credits applicable toward their degree in the first term of their academic year to be eligible for an award.

Questions: Contact NYS Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) at www.hesc.ny.gov or 888-697-4372. HESC can also be reached via email at scholarships@hesc.ny.gov.