

Texas-Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (T-STEM) Challenge Scholarship Program

Frequently Asked Questions

References:

TEXAS EDUCATION CODE
Chapter 61, Subchapter GG

[Sec. 61.9791. DEFINITION.](#)

[Sec. 61.9792. SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM.](#)

[Sec. 61.9793. ELIGIBLE STUDENT.](#)

[Sec. 61.9794. ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION.](#)

[Sec. 61.9795. AMOUNT; FUNDING.](#)

COORDINATING BOARD RULES

T-STEM Challenge Scholarship Program Rules, Chapter 22, Subchapter V

[22.570. Authority, Scope, and Purpose.](#)

[22.571. Definitions.](#)

[22.572. Institutions.](#)

[22.573. Eligible Students.](#)

[22.574. Request for Application by Eligible Institutions.](#)

[22.575. Scholarship Application Process.](#)

[22.576. Award Amounts.](#)

[22.577. Reports.](#)

Funding and Institutional Eligibility:

Question: How much funding is available for scholarships in 2012-2013?

Answer: T-STEM is funded for academic year 2012-2013 from an \$8.5 million grant provided to THECB by the Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation (TG). The funding will be allocated among selected qualifying applicants. In order to participate, an applicant must enroll a minimum of 50 students into T-STEM programs and document the establishment of partnerships with business and industry. Fund allocation is proportional to the institution's T-STEM majors.

Question: How was the number of T-STEM students established that determined the eligibility for participation of an institution?

Answer: Applicant eligibility, not student eligibility, was based on fall 2011 first-time, full-time undergraduate students who registered for 12 or more semester credit hours and self-declared as majoring in a qualifying T-STEM CIP code program. These data are provided through certified institutional reports, such as the CBM 001. Note that students' hours taken include all technical, workforce, or academic hours; however, developmental education hours are not included.

Question: *Would a community college district apply with one application or would each campus of a district apply separately?*

Answer: A community college district shall participate as one unit for the T-STEM Challenge Scholarship program. This means, the district's eligibility is established as a unit, and it will submit one Notice of Intent (NOI), one application, and one combined report. The Coordinating Board also will execute one contract for each district. Each district will have one T-STEM Program Director who will coordinate with all the district's participating campuses and serves as the point of contact for Coordinating Board staff.

Question: *Is an institution excluded from applying in the future, if it was not eligible to apply for T-STEM 2012 because it enrolled less than 50 students into its T-STEM program in fall 2011?*

Answer: No, an institution may seek to participate again in the program, beginning in academic year 2013-2014.

Question: *How many institutions have received funding in the past?*

Answer: 2012 is the first year of funding. The list of eligible institutions is listed in appendix A of the Request for Application, posted at <<http://www.THECB.state.tx.us/TSTEM>>.

Question: *Do all the funds have to be used towards tuition or can scholarship funds be given directly to students?*

Answer: Funds may be received by a student or may be credited to a student's school account. (Coordinating Board Rules Chapter 22, Subchapter V, §22.572g: "The institution must maintain records to prove the receipt of program funds by the student or the crediting of such funds to the student's school account. If the Commissioner has reason for concern that an institution has disbursed funds for unauthorized purposes, the Board will notify the Program Officer and financial aid officer and offer an opportunity for a hearing pursuant to the procedures outlined in Chapter 1 of this title.")

Question: *Can scholarships be given to students who pursue a one-year certificate?*

Answer: Yes, students can receive a scholarship for one year only.

Student Eligibility:

Question: *Since first-time-in college undergraduates (FTUG) determined an institution's program size, does this mean scholarships have to go exclusively to FTUG students?*

Answer: No, this count does not preclude an institution from awarding a scholarship to a second-year (or later) student, provided that the student qualifies according to RFA section 11.2. FTUG students must be evaluated on academic achievement prior to receiving a scholarship (RFA section 11.1). The intent of the selection criteria are to help with the selection of students that can be successful in the T-STEM Challenge Scholarship Program, i.e., students that show promise to both graduate on time and succeed finding employment after graduation

Question: *We do not have access to information of whether first-time scholarship recipients "have graduated from high school with a least a 3.0 GPA on a four-point scale in mathematics and sciences courses." Can we substitute overall institutional GPA since we do not have the time required to disaggregate math and science grades from all grades?*

Answer: This requirement is statutory, Texas Education Code, Section 61.9793. T-STEM scholarship recipients must meet all established criteria and one is that they graduate

from high school with a grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 on a four-point scale in mathematics and science courses. It is likely that this information may be difficult to obtain; however, it is a requirement. Students that do not fulfill this criterion are not eligible to receive a T-STEM scholarship.

Question: Does the 3.0 high school GPA in math and science courses apply to non-traditional students and other students whose high school experience was some years ago? An example might be a young man who enrolled in the army just out of high school and is now returning for his degree five or ten years later.

Answer: The requirement applies to all T-STEM scholarship recipients. The T-STEM Challenge Scholarship Program is a merit-based scholarship program. The statute applies, even if a student does not enroll immediately upon graduation from high school.

Question: Can students participate if they are enrolled in college based on their General Educational Development (GED) test, if their math and science scores from that test are counted?

Answer: Yes, those students may participate. Non-standard high school math and science scores, i.e., those not based on a four-point scale or those based on foreign grade-scales, must be converted to the standard four-point scale.

Question: In calculating students' math and science GPA, can weights be taken into account for honors or AP classes, if the high school lists the weights?

Answer: Yes, the GPA calculation would follow the school's general GPA calculation.

Question: Do all students have to register with the Selective Service System and would this exclude undocumented students?

Answer: The requirement for registration is in statute ([Texas Education Code 51.9095](#)). Undocumented students can also register. They cannot do it via the internet/web, but they can fill out a form and mail it: <<http://www.sss.gov/default.htm>>.

Question: Can institutions collect FAFSA forms as part of the T-STEM student application?

Answer: The THECB does not require or collect the FAFSA form, because this scholarship is merit-based and not based on need. An institution might be able to make a case for collecting the FAFSA form from a student applicant, because it would allow consideration for other types of aid (need-based), besides the support through T-STEM.

Business Partnerships and Part-Time Employment:

Question: What is the purpose of the business or industry partnerships under the T-STEM program?

Answer: As part of the business or industry partnerships institutions have to develop and document part-time employment opportunities for T-STEM students. The component of part-time employment experience is critical for the sustainability of the program, even if there is no numerical threshold attached for an institution to receive an award.

Question: Does T-STEM part-time employment have to be offered through T-STEM business or industry partners?

Answer: No. For example, institutions may choose to offer opportunities for part-time work study to its T-STEM students; such experiences would count as T-STEM employment.

Question: Do T-STEM scholarship recipients have to be employed part time by business or industry partners?

Answer: No. T-STEM business partnerships have the purpose to foster part-time employment opportunities for T-STEM students, but students would not lose their scholarships for lack of employment.

Question: Why is part-time employment limited to 15 hours per week?

Answer: Students should be encouraged to gain experience in the field without being overburdened. The intent of this requirement is to allow students to have ample time to focus on their academic work.

Question: Does a partnering business have to provide paid employment to students in the scholarship program?

Answer: The purpose of the community college partnerships with local business or industry is to allow students to have access to part-time work experiences in a STEM field. Yes, it is a reasonable expectation that business or industry partners provide 15 hour internships. However, there is no requirement that would prohibit an institution to partner without such offers. Another purpose of the partnerships is to establish STEM employment needs in the regions.

Question: Must businesses or industry partners agree to employ T-STEM scholarship recipients after their graduation?

Answer: There is no requirement that business or industry partners commit to hire T-STEM graduates.

Question: Is there an employment provision for the T-STEM program?

Answer: In order to be eligible to receive funding for a follow-up academic year an awarded institution must demonstrate that at least 70 percent of its graduates, within three months after graduation, either find employment in a T-STEM field or continue their education by taking upper-division 4-year college courses, i.e. they must pursue a baccalaureate degree in STEM.

Question: Must a student forgo a scholarship offer, if that student is working at a part-time job, like a restaurant or retail store, that is not in a T-STEM field?

Answer: The statute states (TEC, Section 61.9793): "... a student must ... agree to work no more than 15 hours a week for a business participating in the STEM program." The RFA interprets this in such a way that the scholarship recipient agrees, and the institution certifies, not to "work more than 15 hours a week in their chosen instructional program area or related field, or for a business participating in the T-STEM Challenge Scholarship Program." The awarded institution has no obligation to question scholarship recipients about their private employment arrangements that are not with a T-STEM business partner or in their chosen instructional program area or related field.

Question: Does an institution have to keep records that track a student's employment? Or may the institution just keep a signed statement on file, saying a student will work no more than 15 hours a week in their chosen field, etc.?

Answer: An awarded institution will track any T-STEM related employment for the purpose of certification according to RFA sections 11.2 and 15.2, for every semester scholarships are given. It will be important for the success of the program, to have detailed records about the employment experiences offered through T-STEM.

Question: *Can scholarship recipients work as work study tutors and be paid for by administrative funds that an awarded institution receives?*

Answer: Yes, an institution may expend T-STEM administrative funds (five percent of a total award) on student work study, if the work study is within the scholarship recipient's chosen instructional program area or related field, or, if the work study relates directly to the administration of the T-STEM program. If the work study is for administrative purposes, the institution cannot count the employment as T-STEM part-time employment experience.

Question: *Who ensures that the experience in the field is a viable one for students?*

Answer: Institutions will ensure through their partnerships that work experiences are viable.

Question: *If a scholarship recipient works in an unpaid academic co-operative as a capstone experience for the AS programs, or if a recipient works in an unpaid internship as a degree requirement for the AAS programs, would this count as partnership effort between the awarded institution and a business or industry?*

Answer: Yes, capstone experiences and unpaid internships may count as part-time work.