



NYS Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Questions & Answers

(Visit hesc.ny.gov for the latest program guidelines and application information.)

The STEM Incentive Program was first announced by Governor Andrew Cuomo in his 2014 State of the State address, and was introduced as part of his 2014-15 Executive Budget. As such, components of the Program are subject to change until enactment by the Governor and the Legislature. The following responses pertain to the Program as introduced by the Governor.

Program Availability

Q1: When will the application be available?

A: The STEM Incentive Program will be statutorily established if enacted as part of the 2014-15 State Budget. All materials pertaining to the program will be available shortly thereafter.

Q2: When can students start to apply?

A: Students may begin to apply after enactment of the Program.

Q3: Can a student refuse the STEM award?

A: A student must apply for a STEM award. If the student has applied for the STEM award and is deemed eligible, the student may refuse the award. A student who has received payment of a STEM award for one or more terms may opt to not receive subsequent awards. However, such student would need to either fulfill the 5 year service requirement upon graduation, or repay the amounts which were previously awarded, plus interest.

Q4: Is the program available to current college students?

A: No. The program is only available to students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school class beginning in the 2013-14 school year and who continue to meet eligibility while pursuing their undergraduate degree thereafter.

Award Amount

Q1: What is the maximum award?

A: The maximum award is equal to the SUNY resident undergraduate tuition rate or actual tuition, whichever is less.

Q2: Is TAP subtracted?

A: Yes. As an award that covers the cost of tuition only, TAP is subtracted from the amount of tuition; the STEM award would then cover any remaining tuition costs.

Q3: Can a student waive his or her TAP award to receive a full STEM award?

A: No. A student who is eligible for a TAP award cannot receive a full STEM award. The full STEM award will be reduced by the amount of the TAP award.

Q4: Is the STEM award available for the summer term?

A: Yes. The STEM award is available for the summer term, beginning with the summer of 2015, provided that the student enrolls full-time (at least 12 credits) for the summer term. However, a STEM award recipient is only eligible to receive eight payments (EOP, SEEK or College Discovery students or students pursuing a program of study normally requiring 5 years are eligible to receive a total of 10 payments).

Q5: How are transfer students' award amounts, as per maximum term allowances, determined?

A: Students who transfer to another SUNY or CUNY college and continue to pursue a STEM program of study can receive a total of eight payments (EOP, SEEK or College Discovery students or students pursuing a program of study normally requiring 5 years are eligible to receive a total of 10 payments).

Q6: If a student transfers, are they required to immediately transfer from a 2 to 4 year institution to keep their STEM award?

A: Yes. A student must transfer immediately from a 2 year institution to a 4 year institution to continue to be eligible for his/her STEM award payments unless the student qualifies for a deferment allowing for an interruption in study.

Q7: How are veterans awards (e.g., VTA, Chapter 33) used in the calculation of the STEM award?

A: Tuition-only awards, such as the VTA, would be deducted from the amount of tuition; any remaining tuition costs would be covered by the STEM award. Awards that cover the student's cost of attendance (such as Chapter 33, NYS Regents Awards for Children of Deceased and Disabled Veterans, MERIT) are not duplicative of the STEM award and would not be subtracted from the amount of tuition.

Student Eligibility

Q1: Is this available for part time students after the first full time enrollment?

A: No. Students must be enrolled for a minimum of 12 credits per semester.

Q2: Are there income requirements to receive the award?

A: There are no income requirements for the STEM award.

Q3: What if the student graduates from high school in the fall semester; can they qualify if their first college semester is the spring?

A: No. A student will not be eligible to receive an award until the first fall term following his or her high school graduation.

Q4: If the student graduates high school in the fall can they wait to register for college the following fall instead of directly after graduation and be eligible?

A: A student who graduates from high school in December or June of a particular school year must register by the fall term following his/her high school graduation. A student who does not enroll the first fall term immediately following his/her graduation but enrolls the subsequent fall will not be eligible for a STEM award.

Q5: Is there an estimate on how many students may be eligible?

A: All NYS students who graduate in the top 10 percent of their high school graduating class are eligible to apply for the STEM award.

Q6: Is the award point system extended by special programs (SEEK/HEOP) to accommodate another year of eligibility?

A: Yes. Opportunity program students would be eligible for annual awards for five years of academic study.

Q7: How will students qualify for the program given they are not admitted into a major?

A: A student is not required to declare a major to be eligible for a STEM award. Rather, the student must be enrolled in an approved undergraduate program leading to a career in science, technology, engineering, or mathematics.

STEM Majors/STEM Jobs

Q1: Who determines which programs are eligible for STEM awards?

A: A general list of approved undergraduate programs will be available on the HESC website.

Q2: Will HESC help with job placement after a student graduate?

A: No. It is the responsibility of the student to locate a job.

Q3: Are paid internships applicable to the employment requirements?

A: Yes. Paid internships are applicable provided the student has completed his or her degree and the internship is not part of an undergraduate, graduate or post-graduate program of study.

Q4: Is there a grace period between graduating and working?

A: Yes. As currently proposed, there is a six month grace period between the time in which a student completes his or her final degree and the time by which he or she must be employed in a STEM job.

Q5: Are students going to be guaranteed jobs upon completion?

A: No.

Q6: Will there be a list of approved jobs?

A: Yes. A list of eligible fields of employment will be available on the HESC website.

Q7: What happens if the student can't find a job?

A: The bill allows HESC to waive the student's financial obligation due to extreme hardship. Upon completion of such waiver, the full amount of the award given would be converted to a student loan, which must be repaid with interest, unless the student has secured a STEM job.

Q8: Is there a waiver in the 5 year requirement for unemployment? What exactly are the requirements to work? Full time, part time, etc.?

A: HESC is authorized to defer the terms and conditions of a recipient's service requirement for certain interruptions in employment. The bill, as introduced with the 2014-15 Executive Budget, does not specifically require full-time employment.

GPA/Satisfactory Academic Progress

Q1: Is the GPA requirement of 3.0 by semester or cumulative at end of each term?

A: The student must earn a minimum GPA of 3.0 each term and must also maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0 during his/her undergraduate study.

Q2: Besides the 3.0 GPA requirement, do they have to have a certain number of earned hours as well? Is there a progress component i.e. completion of credits/semester?

A: The student must be enrolled full-time and, therefore, must earn a minimum of 12 credits per term.