

## **BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION MASSGRANT PLUS**

### **PURPOSE**

Massachusetts Assistance for Student Success Grant Plus (MASSGrant Plus) is the Commonwealth's Tuition-free assistance program for families earning up to \$85,000 annually. These guidelines pertain to the state's MASSGrant Plus program.<sup>1</sup>

MASSGrant Plus is funded subject to the availability of funds and appropriation from the Massachusetts Legislature M.G.L. c. 15A, Section 16. The program provides financial assistance to full and part-time undergraduate students who meet the eligibility requirements and are enrolled in and pursuing an approved program of study at a public two-year or four-year college or university in the state. This last dollar financial assistance program ensures that eligible students have adequate resources to fully cover the cost of tuition and fees towards a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree. The MASSGrant Plus program also provides eligible students with an *allowance and support award* to cover other educational expenses that may impede opportunities to enroll in college or complete a program of study.

### **DEFINITIONS**

***ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:***

An institution within the system of public institutions of higher education as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

***ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:***

Any approved undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution, as defined.

### **ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

To be eligible for the MASSGrant Plus program, the student must:

- a) be enrolled in an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) 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 Board of Higher Education (BHE) policy;

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<sup>1</sup> Information on the Commonwealth's MassEducate and MassReconnect, the Commonwealth's "free community college" grant programs, is available by clicking on the respective links: [www.mass.edu/masseducate](http://www.mass.edu/masseducate) and [www.mass.edu/massreconnect](http://www.mass.edu/massreconnect)

- c) be a U.S. Citizen, lawful permanent resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations; or have an approved eligibility status designated by the BHE pursuant to the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law<sup>2</sup> or otherwise;
- d) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) as applicable for eligible students under the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law, annually by August 1<sup>st</sup>, for priority consideration of assistance, or other designated deadline that may be determined by the Department of Higher Education (DHE);
- e) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- f) not be in default on any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution, or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid program;
- g) not have earned a prior associate or bachelor's degree (or the equivalent) if enrolled at a community college, or a prior bachelor's degree if enrolled at a four-year college or university;
- h) enroll, as a matriculated student, full-time or 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
- i) meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards.

#### **MASSGRANT PLUS CONDITIONS**

- Disbursement of funds: MASSGrant Plus funding is to be appropriated to participating institutions through a formula approved by the Commissioner of Higher Education.
- MASSGrant Plus funds appropriated during an academic year must be committed to students by institutions and expended at the conclusion of the fiscal year.
- 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 MASSGrant Plus program, to promote persistence in and completion of their program of study.

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<sup>2</sup> M.G.L. c. 15A, Section 9, as amended by Section 11 of Chapter 20 of the Acts of 2023, and further amended by Section 22 of Chapter 140 of the Acts of 2024 For information on the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law see here: <https://www.mass.edu/tuitionequity/>

- 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.
- MASSGrant Plus may be awarded to support summer enrollment that occurs prior to the end of the corresponding fiscal year, if funds are available.
- Institutions are required, upon request, to submit data to the Department of Higher Education to demonstrate maintenance of fiscal effort in their commitment to institutional aid to students, while participating in the MASSGrant Plus program.
- The BHE shall annually establish the tuition rates for the community colleges and state universities and will monitor the mandatory fees set by colleges' respective Boards of Trustees.

## **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY BY ENROLLMENT INTENSITY AND DEGREE TYPE**

Eligible students may be awarded MASSGrant Plus funds as follows:

### **Bachelor's Degree**

Full-Time	Maximum of 5 years, 10 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)
Part-Time	Maximum of 7 years, 14 semesters for part-time (minimum of 6 enrolled credits per academic term)

### **Associate Degree**

Full-Time	Maximum of 3 years, 6 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term). An additional year of assistance may be awarded based on extenuating circumstances, with approval of a written appeal.
Part-Time	Maximum of 5 years, 10 semesters for part-time (6 enrolled credits minimum per academic term). An additional year of assistance may be awarded based on extenuating circumstances, with approval of a written appeal.

### **Certificate Program**

Full-Time	Maximum of 4 semesters
Part-Time	Maximum of 8 semesters

## AWARD VALUE

Subject to appropriation and the availability of funds, MASSGrant Plus is a last dollar resource awarded to eligible students under this program and shall not exceed the calculated costs of tuition and fees as determined by the institution and published in its annual Cost of Attendance (COA), and approved by the BHE pursuant to M.G.L. c.15A, Section 5B(c)(1), for the academic term, during which the award is made.

An allowance of up to \$1,200 for books and supplies, and other approved costs, may be awarded to students who meet the MASSGrant Plus eligibility requirements and award criteria.

MASSGrant Plus funds expended beyond costs related to tuition and fees, must be approved or authorized by the Commissioner of Higher Education, or his designee.

## AWARD CALCULATION

**All** students who meet the eligibility requirements may receive a MASSGrant Plus award to cover Financial Unmet Need for costs associated with tuition and fees for the corresponding academic term or year. The *Financial Unmet Need* calculation for an eligible student is as follows:

$$\text{MASSGrant Plus Award} = \text{Tuition and Fees (minus) All Other Non-Loan Aid}$$

An additional **MASSGrant Plus Allowance and Support Award**<sup>3</sup> for books and supplies, and other approved costs, may be available to students who meet the award criteria. The additional award calculation, based on the number of credits, is as follows:

$$\text{MASSGrant Plus Allowance and Support Award} = \text{Cost of Attendance COA (minus) All Other Non-Loan Aid}$$

12 or more credits	up to \$1,200 per academic year; \$600 per semester
9-11 credits	up to \$900 per year; \$450 per semester
6-8 credits	up to \$600 per year; \$300 per semester

## AWARD DISBURSEMENT

Participating institutions must verify that each recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the MASSGrant Plus program, and that the student is enrolled in an approved certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree program. Further, the institution is required to verify that the student has not earned a prior degree (or equivalent) before awarding and disbursing funds, which may be done through a signed affidavit after all reasonable attempts were made to secure prior transcripts, if any.

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<sup>3</sup> Students participating in the state's MassEducate or MassReconnect programs may be eligible to receive an additional Allowance and Support Award of up to \$1,200, if they meet the eligibility and award calculation requirements.

Institutions are required to refund any funds that are deemed to have been improperly awarded and disbursed to recipients who are later determined to be ineligible for the program. MASSGrant Plus funds may be awarded to support a trailing summer term that occurs prior to the end of the corresponding fiscal year, if funds are available.

### **ANNUAL REVIEW**

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the MASSGrant Plus program. 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 (OSFA) 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.

### **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT**

All institutions receiving funds under the MASSGrant Plus Program 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 MASSGrant Plus program.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the MASSGrant Plus program. OSFA will coordinate specification 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.