

John and Abigail Adams Scholarship

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

PURPOSE

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship is a merit-based program that provides a credit toward tuition for up to eight semesters of undergraduate education at a Massachusetts state college or university. For this scholarship, merit is based on student scores on the 10th grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) test.

The purpose of the award is to: reward and inspire student achievement; help attract more high-performing students to Massachusetts public higher education; and provide families of college-bound students with financial assistance.

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, except those institutions retaining Massachusetts resident tuition payments.

- **Eligible Program:**

Any state-supported undergraduate degree program offered by an eligible institution

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship program, the student must:

- a) be admitted to an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) have graduated from or under the auspices of a Massachusetts public high school, and
 - a. as of June 2005 through June 2015, and by the end of the junior year,
 - i. was in the highest 25 percent in their district on the 10th grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) English Language Arts and Mathematics test, and
 - ii. scored in the Advanced category on one test and Proficient or Advanced on the other test; **or**

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- b. as of June 2026 or thereafter, and by the end of their junior year,
 - i. was in the highest 25 percent in their district on the 10th grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science test, and
 - ii. scored in the Advanced category on one test and Proficient or Advanced on the other tests

Note: an earned GED does not fulfill the high school graduation requirement

- c) (1) be a U.S. Citizen, permanent legal resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations and 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 policy; or (2) have an approved eligibility status designated by the Board of Higher Education pursuant to Section 9 of Chapter 15A, as amended by Section 11 of Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023;
- d) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or, if ineligible to complete the FAFSA, then complete the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) annually
- e) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- f) not be in default on any federal or state student loans or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid programs;
- g) have not earned a bachelor's degree (or the equivalent);
- h) maintain a cumulative 3.0 GPA on all academic coursework at the institution awarding the degree; or if transferring, has maintained a cumulative 3.0 GPA at the transfer institution;
Note: *The institution is responsible for verifying the cumulative GPA at the end of the spring semester of each academic year; if the student drops below the required 3.0 GPA, the scholarship is permanently forfeited.*
- i) enroll, as a matriculated student, on a full-time basis (minimum of 12 credits, or the equivalent) in a Massachusetts public college or university; and
- j) meet satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards.

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The institution may not grant an exception to the above requirements. In rare and extenuating circumstances, the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee may permit an exception to the above criteria and authorize (in writing) the institution to award the Adams Scholarship. In such cases, supporting documentation must be provided by the student and maintained by the institution and the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

AWARD VALUE

- The award under this program shall be equal to the value of required tuition (not including fees) for all state-supported undergraduate courses.
- The scholarship may be awarded to eligible students for a maximum of eight semesters of enrollment (not including summer terms), which must occur within six years following high school graduation.
- The program will be awarded at no cost to the institution.

AWARD PROCEDURE

Beginning with the Class of 2005, the State Department of Education will annually certify the eligibility of student recipients for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. Consistent with other programs, the State Department of Education will provide students with a letter of eligibility and provide the Board of Higher Education and Office of Student Financial Assistance with a list of eligible students designated as Adams Scholarship recipients. Each John and Abigail Adams Scholarship recipient shall be responsible for submitting documentation of eligibility to the institution where they will enroll.

The Office of Student Financial Assistance shall annually provide institutions with a roster of eligible students that have met the requirements of completing the FAFSA. Institutions may use this roster to verify student eligibility whenever other documentation is not available.

The institution shall award scholarships equal to the value of required tuition. The Adams Scholarship is a non-need based program. Financial need is not a requirement for eligibility. However, recipients must meet all requirements as defined for eligible students including filing the FAFSA or MASFA.

Retroactive effect: If a student becomes eligible for or seeks to utilize the scholarship after enrolling at an eligible institution, the institution may apply the scholarship (tuition waiver) retroactively only to the beginning of the academic year during which the student

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demonstrates or presents evidence of eligibility. Institutions may not issue retroactive credits or tuition refunds for prior semesters in prior fiscal years.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship 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 or its designee, and the Office of Student Financial Assistance 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 John and Abigail Adams Scholarship 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 John and Abigail Adams Scholarship.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. OSFA will establish the timeline, specifications, 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.