

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

MASSGrant

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance

PURPOSE

The Massachusetts Assistance for Student Success Grant (MASSGrant) is a state-funded financial aid program, supported through annual appropriations from the Massachusetts State Legislature under Massachusetts General Laws (Chapter 15A, Section 16).

MASSGrant provides need-based financial assistance to undergraduate students who reside in Massachusetts and who are enrolled in and pursuing a program of study in any approved public or independent college, university, school of nursing, or other state-approved institution of higher education. The MASSGrant program is designed to support students with the greatest financial need. To qualify, a student must be eligible for a Federal Pell Grant during the same award year. Students remain eligible for a MASSGrant even if their Student Aid Index (SAI) exceeds their institution's Cost of Attendance (COA), provided they also qualify for a Pell Grant in that year.

DEFINITIONS

- **Eligible Institution:**

An eligible institution is defined as a state-approved public (as identified in M.G.L. c. 15A, § 5), private, independent, for profit or nonprofit, institution located in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and authorized to grant undergraduate degrees, certificates, or diploma programs and that is also approved by the U.S. Department of Education to administer Title IV programs. Massachusetts state-approved public, private, independent and non-profit Institutions located in states that have reciprocity agreements (VT, PA, and the District of Columbia) and award associate or bachelor's degrees are also eligible to participate.

- **Eligible Program:**

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

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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

- a) be enrolled at an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) be eligible for the Pell Grant program as determined by the US Department of Education, if eligible to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); or if ineligible to complete the FAFSA, have an SAI that does not exceed 14,790 as calculated by the Massachusetts Application for State Financial (MASFA);
- 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 by **June 30, 2026**;
- 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) not have earned a prior associate or bachelor's degree 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, on a full-time (minimum of 12 credits, or the equivalent) in an eligible undergraduate program of study leading to a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree;
- i) not have reached the maximum semesters of eligibility to continue to receive a MASSGrant award (eligibility is limited to a specific number of semesters based on the type of institution that the student attends);
- j) if enrolled in a clock hour program, the student must: 1) complete a minimum of 24 clock hours per week 2) complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of July

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

1 – December 31 to qualify for a Fall disbursement 3) complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of January 1 – June 30 to qualify for a Spring disbursement;

- k) if enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) program courses, the student must be simultaneously enrolled in either a certificate, associate or bachelor's degree program in order to be considered eligible for a MASSGrant. Credits a student earns for ESL program courses may be counted towards his or her full-time enrollment status; and
- l) meet satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards.

MASSGRANT CONDITIONS

- Disbursement of funds: MASSGrant funding is to be awarded to students based on an indexing system approved by the Commissioner or his/her designee.
- MASSGrant funds awarded during an academic year must be disbursed 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; and no less than on a quarterly basis.
- Institutions shall facilitate access to on-campus support services to students who receive assistance under the MASSGrant program, to promote persistence in and completion of their program of study.
- 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.
- 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 program.

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY BY ENROLLMENT INTENSITY AND DEGREE TYPE

Eligible students may be awarded MASSGrant funds as follows¹:

Bachelor's Degree (Four-Year or Three-Year Degrees)

Full-Time (4YR)	Maximum of 4 years, 8 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)
Full-Time (3YR)	Maximum of 3 years, 6 semesters full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)

Associate Degree

Full-Time	Maximum of 2 years, 4 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)
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Certificate Program

Full-time	Maximum of 2 semesters for full-time (minimum of 12 enrolled credits per academic term)
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AWARD VALUE

Subject to appropriation and the availability of funds, the **MASSGrant Award** is a resource made available to students enrolled at any approved public or independent college, university, school of nursing, or other state-approved institutions in the Commonwealth. MASSGrant awards should not exceed an institution's published annual Cost of Attendance (COA).

Awards are determined by an indexing system approved by the Commissioner of Higher Education that considers the following: federal Student Aid Index, Pell Grant eligibility, type of institution a student attends, and available state appropriated funding.

The BHE approved **MASSGrant awards for Academic Year 2026-27** can be accessed by clicking the following link to the payment chart [here](#).

¹ An additional year of assistance may be awarded based on extenuating circumstances, with approval of a written appeal.

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

AWARD CALCULATION

Students enrolled at an eligible institution and pursuing an undergraduate program of study leading to a certificate, associate, or bachelor's degree may receive a **MASSGrant Award** to cover their **Cost of Attendance**.

AWARD DISBURSEMENT

Participating institutions must verify that each recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the MASSGrant program, and that the student is enrolled full-time 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.

MASSGrant funds are disbursed to the institution in two payments for the Fall and Spring semesters for students who meet all eligibility criteria, as certified by the institution. Payment of MASSGrant funds is sent directly to the institution from the Commonwealth's Comptroller's Office. One hundred percent of the funds from the MASSGrant award shall be used to credit the student's account. Funds must be disbursed to students during the traditional academic year.

Institutions are required to refund the DHE any funds that are deemed to have been improperly awarded and disbursed to recipients who are later determined to be ineligible for the program.

Refunds may occur because of adjustments to SAI or Pell eligibility, changes to dependency status, and/or changes to a student's enrollment status. Refunds may also occur if the institution receives payment and becomes aware that a student has withdrawn, dropped below full-time status, taken an approved leave of absence, or otherwise fails to complete the period of enrollment as charged.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education (DHE) is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the MASSGrant 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

Guidelines Effective August 1, 2026 (BHE 27-05)

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 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.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the MASSGrant. 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.