

ABILITY TO BENEFIT POLICY

Division: Student Affairs

Policy Statement

The purpose of the Ability to Benefit (ATB) policy is to determine if prospective students who do not have a high school diploma, home school diploma, General Educational Development (GED), or recognized equivalent are academically prepared to successfully complete their planned program or courses of study and to help direct them to attain the necessary academic preparation.

Procedures

Students who have not completed a high school diploma or its equivalent, may enroll at Terra State Community College and receive financial aid if they meet the following requirements:

- Degree or certificate-seeking in an eligible career pathway program and meet the federally mandated cut-off scores in reading, writing, and math on the federally approved assessment test (for example: Accuplacer).
- Degree or certificate-seeking in an eligible career pathway program and transfers in a minimum of six (6) credit hours of accredited college-level courses.

An eligible career pathway program is a program that:

1. Aligns with the skill needs of industries in the economy of the State or regional economy involved.
2. Prepares an individual to be successful in any of a full range of secondary or postsecondary education options, including apprenticeships registered under the National Apprenticeship Act.
3. Includes counseling to support an individual in achieving the individual's education and career goals.
4. Includes, as appropriate, education offered concurrently with and in the same context as workforce preparation activities and training or a specific occupation or occupational cluster.
5. Organizes education, training, and other services to meet the particular needs of an individual in a manner that accelerates the educational and career advancement of the individual to the extent practicable.
6. Enables an individual to attain a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent, and at least one recognized postsecondary credential.
7. Helps an individual enter or advance within a specific occupation or occupational cluster.

An eligible career pathway program must meet each of the statutory requirements above. Under those requirements, an eligible career pathway program must include two components: A Title IV eligible postsecondary program component as defined under 34 CFR 668.8, and a component that enables an individual to attain a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent. The component of the eligible career pathway program that enables an individual to attain a high school diploma or its recognized equivalent may not be paid for using Title IV aid and should not be incorporated into a student's Title IV enrollment status or Title IV cost of attendance as defined in [section 472 of the Higher Education Act](#). Only the enrollment status and costs associated with the Title IV eligible postsecondary program component can be paid for using Title IV aid.

Resources

- [Federal Student Aid GEN-16-09](#)
- [Higher Education Act of 1965 \(Section 472\)](#)
- [Code of Federal Regulations 34 CFR 668.8](#)

Definitions

Term	Definition
<i>Ability to Benefit (ATB)</i>	Determines if prospective students who do not have a high school diploma, home school diploma, General Educational Development (GED), or recognized equivalent are academically prepared to successfully complete their planned program or courses of study and to help direct them to attain the necessary academic preparation.
<i>Accuplacer</i>	A recognized standardized test tool to measure academic proficiency
<i>GED</i>	A high school equivalency diploma
<i>National Apprenticeship Act</i>	Provides statutory authority for the registered apprenticeship program within the Department of Labor and for related grant programs
<i>Title IV</i>	Federal financial aid funds

Approval History

<i>Date</i>	<i>Policy/Procedure or Entire Document</i>	<i>Notes (Types of Actions)</i>	<i>**Approved by</i>
10/18/2011	Entire Document	Issued	Unknown
11/04/2022	Policy	Edited – Updated to new form	Jessica McCarthy
11/04/2022	Procedure	Edited – Updated to new form Added language to align with most recent Federal Student Aid guidance and definitions of eligible career pathway	Jessica McCarthy
11/17/2022	Policy/Procedure	Approval of Policy/Procedure with edits	William Taylor-CASA Co-Chair
11/21/2025	Policy	Policy Reviewed and no changes required	Jessica McCarthy, Dean of Enrollment Services

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