

Grants and Scholarships - Ability to Benefit Questions and Answers

What is meant by "independently administered" in regard to the ATB exam?

Schools are advised to refer to memos "CEO 07-02" and "CEO 07-03" from the State Education Department regarding the "Guidance Concerning Administration of Ability-to-Benefit Tests to Determine Eligibility for TAP Awards".

What Ability-to-Benefit tests can be used?

In September 2007, The Board of Regents approved four ability-to-benefit tests that can be used to determine eligibility for State financial aid: Accuplacer, ASSET, COMPASS, and CELSA (Combined English Language Skills Assessment). The CELSA is approved providing the applicant also takes a math component from one of the other approved tests.

Do first time state aid recipients in the 2006-07 academic year or thereafter who have a certificate of graduation (a high school diploma or recognized equivalent) from within the United States or from the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Guam or the Northern Mariana Islands have to pass an Ability to Benefit (ATB) test to be eligible to receive New York State funded grants or scholarships?

No.

Would a student who has earned 24 credits in the core classes required by the State Education Department, be eligible for a GED?

Yes, students who have earned 24 credits in the core classes required by SED are eligible for a GED. [Learn more.](#)

Would students have to obtain a GED or do the credits alone meet the ATB requirement?

If the student has earned the SED required 24 core credits, they do not have to obtain a GED to fulfill the ATB requirement. Although, students who fall into this category are encouraged to receive a GED.

What requirements for ATB do college graduates need to meet?

College graduates - from US or recognized foreign colleges and universities are considered to meet the ATB standards and need not have to take an ATB exam or provide proof of a US high school diploma. (SED's criterion for foreign colleges and universities is that they be recognized by the home country's ministry of education).

Are transfers and re-admit students who first received TAP in the 2006-07 academic year required to comply with the new Ability-to-Benefit regulations?

Yes. The ATB regulation applies to all students who are first-time state aid recipients in the 06-07 academic year or thereafter.

How can schools see if a student is a first-time state aid recipient?

The Student Status Listing (Full and Abbreviated), as well as the rosters and individual student records, list the student's first year of state aid.

Are first-time state aid recipients entering as freshman students, or continuing students in the 2006-07 academic year with a non-U.S. high school diploma required to pass an ATB exam? Does this requirement apply to all State aid (ex. Academic Excellence)?

Yes, the ATB exam applies to all students who are first-time state aid recipients and is a requirement to be eligible to receive any first-time State aid.

Must the ATB requirement be met before the first day of classes for the term seeking aid?

For the academic year 2007-08, students will be allowed to take and pass an ATB exam up until the end of each term in which they are seeking the award. Beginning in summer of the 2008-09 academic year, students must take the ATB exam within the add/drop period of the term.

If a student fails an ATB exam prior to starting in the Fall term, will the student be able to re-take the ATB exam for that Fall terms State aid?

Schools will need to follow the specific requirements of the ATB exam they are using.

If a student is given permission to retake the ATB exam, are they given additional time beyond the add/drop period to take and pass the ATB?

No, a student must take the retest within the add/drop period.

How can a first-time state aid recipient become eligible if they do not have a high school diploma or GED from within the United States?

An Ability to Benefit (ATB) test must be passed if a student does not have a high school diploma or GED from within the United States.

Is a home-schooled student eligible for state aid?

Yes. A home-schooled student is eligible for state aid if they have a letter from the District Superintendent, or the student can take and pass an approved ATB test or the GED test.

Does a student have to take an ATB test if they have an Individualized Education Diploma (IEP) diploma?

Yes. A student must pass an ATB test as IEP diplomas are not equivalent to a local or Regents diploma.

Can schools still accept affidavits for students stating that they have a high school diploma from outside of the United States?

No. Effective July 1, 2006, students without a high school diploma from the United States must have passed an approved ATB exam.

If a student was previously enrolled in a school and then deferred enrollment to a later date but they do not meet the new ATB requirements, will they need to take the ATB exam?

Schools must use the date of actual enrollment.