

# TEACHER OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM RULES AND REGULATIONS

## **RULE 1 - ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE**

- I. The Arkansas Department of Higher Education (ADHE) shall administer the Teacher Opportunity Program with the policies set by the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board (AHECB). All formal communications shall be addressed to or signed by the Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education or the Director's designee. The Teacher Opportunity Program Advisory Council shall provide advice to the Department of Higher Education regarding administration of the program.
- II. Teacher Opportunity Program Advisory Council
  - A. The Teacher Opportunity Program Advisory Council shall consist of eight members. The members will be appointed annually to serve a two-year staggered term by the Director of the Department of Higher Education. The members of this council will consist of representatives from public and private postsecondary institutions with Teacher Education programs, public and private elementary and secondary schools, and the teacher certification division of the Department of Education.
  - B. The Director of the Department of Higher Education or the Director's designee shall serve as the presiding officer of the Teacher Opportunity Program Advisory Council and shall ensure that staff services for the Council are provided.
- III. The final responsibility for selecting loan recipients shall rest with the Department of Higher Education.
- IV. When functioning under Act 109 of 1983, Act 331 of 1987, and any subsequent legislation, the Arkansas Department of Higher Education shall follow the Provisions of the Administrative Procedures Act.

## **RULE 2 - ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

- I. Applicant must be bona fide residents of the State of Arkansas, as defined by the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, as having lived in Arkansas continually for at least twelve (12) months prior the application deadline.
- II. Applicant shall maintain a current teacher license with the Arkansas Department of Education. Only individuals with a provisional license or who are in the alternative licensure program are not considered certified for the purposes of the Dual Certification Incentive Program.

- III. Recipient awarded under the Dual Licensure Incentive Program must:
  - A. Be currently employed as a classroom teacher, which includes librarian/media specialist, guidance counselor and administrator, in a public school in Arkansas; and
  - B. Have been employed as a classroom teacher for at least three (3) years immediately preceding application; and
  - C. Be accepted for enrollment in a teacher education program that will lead to licensure in a subject area that is different than the teacher's current licensure area and the subject area has either:
    - 1. Been declared by the Arkansas Department of Education as a subject area with a shortage of teachers; or
    - 2. Is in the grade level and subject area for which the school district has requested a waiver under 6-17-309.
  - D. Earn a 2.5 cumulative grade point average in courses required toward dual licensure.
  
- IV. Non-Dual Licensure Program requires that:
  - A. Applicant must be currently employed as a classroom teacher which includes librarian/media specialist, guidance counselor and administrator, in Arkansas and declare an intention to continue such employment in Arkansas.
  - B. Applicant must be enrolled in an approved institution in Arkansas.
  - C. Applicant must be enrolled in college level courses, excluding correspondence courses, directly related to their employment as certified by the Director of the Department of Education, General Education Division.
  - D. Recipient must maintain at least a 2.50 grade point average in the courses funded by the Teacher Opportunity Program. Recipients funded for one course must obtain at least a "B" for that course. Recipients funded for two courses must obtain at least a "B" for one course and a "C" for the other.

### **RULE 3 - APPLICATION PROCESS**

- I. Solicitation of Applicants

Applications will be available at the Arkansas Department of Higher Education's website. Applications will also be mailed to individuals upon request.

II. Submission of Application

Applications include personal information, as well as education and employment information. The Department of Higher Education will review all applications to ensure that all pertinent data are included and will notify the applicant of the status of the application. If the application is incomplete, ADHE will notify the applicant of this status, the information that is missing, and the deadline to submit the information. This deadline will be no less than two weeks from the date of the notification letter.

III. Application Deadline

The application deadline will be set each year by the Department of Higher Education. All applications must be submitted by the established deadline date. Applications received after the deadline date will not be considered for participation in the Teacher Opportunity Program. The Department may establish alternate deadlines for applicants based on the start date of each term.

**RULE 4 – AWARD PROCESS**

I. Selection of Recipients

- A. The final responsibility for selecting recipients shall rest with the Director of the Arkansas Department of Higher Education.
- B. Applications for the Dual Licensure Incentive Program will receive first priority for awards. If funds remain after awarding all eligible applicants under the Dual Licensure Incentive Program, Non-Dual Licensure Program applicants will be ranked according to criteria developed in conjunction with the Department of Education, focusing on state-wide needs.

II. Notification of Recipients

- A. Selected recipients will receive an award notice stating their eligibility for the program. The award notice will include, where applicable, the student's name, social security number, and award amount.

**RULE 5 – REIMBURSEMENT AMOUNT**

- I. Reimbursement for students in the Dual Licensure Incentive Program includes funding for the cost of student fees, books, and instructional supplies at a public institution of higher education in this State assessing the highest rate of student fees. The reimbursement made to one individual within one fiscal year may not exceed the aforementioned costs associated with six semester hours or the equivalent of six semester credit hours, though not to exceed \$3,000 during the fiscal year.
- II. Non-Dual Licensure Program recipients may receive funds up to, but not in excess of, the cost of student fees, books, and instructional supplies at a public institution of higher education in this State assessing the highest rate of student fees. The reimbursement made to one individual within one fiscal year may not exceed the aforementioned costs associated with six semester hours or the equivalent of six semester credit hours.
- III. Based on the availability of program funds, awards will be disbursed to the recipient pursuant to the reimbursement limitations above and ranking status. Recipients must maintain an eligible status to receive funds.

#### **RULE 6 – REIMBURSEMENT DISBURSEMENT**

Teacher Opportunity Program is a reimbursement program. A check made payable to the individual recipient is mailed to the student once he/she has successfully completed the funded course with a satisfactory grade and has provided the Arkansas Department of Higher Education with an original copy of the itemized paid receipt and grade report or transcript for the funded course.

#### **RULE 7- RECIPIENT RESPONSIBILITIES**

It is the recipient's responsibility to notify the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, in writing, of any change in status within 21 days. This will include, but is not limited to:

Change of name;

Change in address;

Change in institution;

Change in coursework to be funded;

Change in enrollment status;

Change in employment; or

Change in licensure status.

Failure to notify the Arkansas Department of Higher Education of a change in status may affect future eligibility or collection status.

### **RULE 8 - PROGRAM DEFINITIONS**

The following definitions are used in the Teacher Opportunity Program (TOP):

Academic Year	A measure of the academic work to be accomplished by the recipient. The academic year is defined as fall, spring, and summer semesters, in that order.
Arkansas Resident	to be considered an Arkansas resident by ADHE, an applicant must be an Arkansas resident for twelve (12) months prior to the application deadline for the financial aid program. Further, the recipient may be asked to provide evidence of a permanent connection with the State of Arkansas. ADHE will look to one or more of the following to determine residency in those cases: (A) Valid Arkansas Driver's License; (B) Proof of payment for Arkansas personal and/or real taxes for previous year; (C) Proof of Arkansas vehicle registration; (D) Proof of Arkansas voter registration; and (E) Other forms of proof of Arkansas residency.
Approved Institution	An Arkansas postsecondary public or private college, university, or school that is currently accredited by a nationally recognized accrediting agency or association that has a teacher licensure program where those courses are directly creditable toward teacher licensure in a baccalaureate institution. The institution must not discriminate against applicants, or employees on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, age, handicap, or national origin, consistent with the provisions of applicable state and federal laws.
Award Year	The award year begins on July 1 of one calendar year, and extends to June 30 of the next calendar year.

Classroom Teacher

An individual who is required to hold a teaching license from the Arkansas Department of Education and who is:

- a. Engaged directly in instruction with students in a classroom setting for more than seventy percent (70%) of the individual's contracted time;
- b. A media specialist or librarian;
- c. A guidance counselor;
- d. An administrator.

Dual License

Licensure to teach in more than one (1) subject area.

Teach on a Full-time Basis

Teach the same number of hours required of teachers who have full-time contracts, as determined by the institution or agency in which an individual is teaching, for a minimum of one (1) academic term, as defined by the institution or agency in which an individual is teaching.