

# EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE) SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM 2020–2021

## GENERAL INFORMATION:

The Early Childhood Educators (ECE) Scholarship Program was funded as a pilot initiative by the Legislature in 2005 for the purpose of increasing the quality and availability of teachers and care providers to work with young children and youth in inclusive settings, including infant/toddler, preschool and school aged programs. The ECE Scholarship Program is designed to provide financial assistance for currently employed early childhood and out-of-school time educators and providers who enroll in an associate's or bachelor's degree program in Early Childhood Education or related programs.

## How do I know if I am eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program?

You are **eligible** for the ECE Scholarship if you meet **ALL** the following criteria:

- Massachusetts permanent residency;
- [United States citizen or eligible non-citizen](#);
- Demonstrated commitment to the field of early care and education
- Currently working in a paid position for at least 20 hours per week in an EEC licensed or authorized program for at least one year as of the deadline;
- Continue employment in an EEC licensed or authorized program while earning your degree;
- Register with EEC'S Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) and have an active PQR number.
- Enroll in an approved undergraduate degree program in early childhood education or a related field; and
- Agree to continue working in the field of early education and care or out of school time for a minimum of 6 months for every semester of scholarship funding you receive.

You are **not eligible** for the ECE Scholarship Program if you meet **ANY** of the following criteria:

- Do not live in Massachusetts;
- Not a United States citizen or eligible non-citizen;
- Do not work in an EEC licensed or authorized early education and care or out of school time program;
- Currently in a default status on state or federal student loans or owe a refund on any previously received federal or state financial aid;
- Have a prior bachelor's degree
- Not enrolled in an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education;
- Not enrolled in an associate's or bachelor's degree program in early childhood education, or a related degree program.

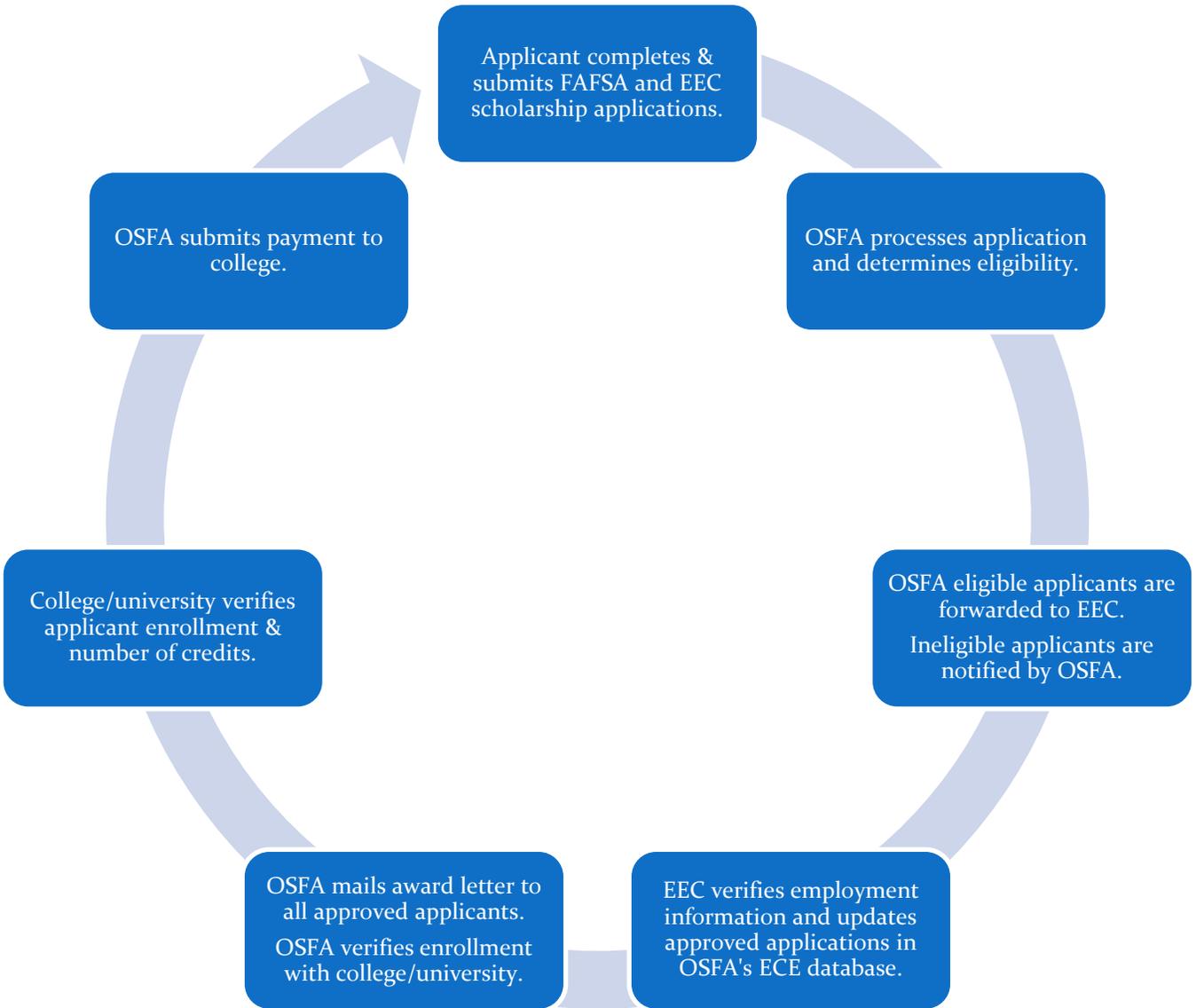
### **What do I need to do to apply for the ECE Scholarship Program?**

- Complete a [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#). This is a requirement for the ECE Scholarship Program. Your ECE application cannot be processed without receipt of your FAFSA.
- Complete the [ECE Scholarship](#) application online annually. Incomplete applications cause a delay in processing and awarding of scholarship funding. Please complete your application in full. The online application is available on the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education, Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA) webpage: [www.osfa.mass.edu](http://www.osfa.mass.edu).
- Matriculate (must be accepted as a candidate) in an associate's or bachelor's degree program in early education and care or a related field at an eligible Massachusetts institution of higher education.

For additional information, please contact OSFA at (617) 391-6070.

### **SCHOLARSHIP PROCESS:**

**Deadline: July 1, 2020**



## **Award Amounts:**

<b><i>Institution Type</i></b>	<b><i>Award per Credit</i></b>	<b><i>Maximum per Semester (9 credits)</i></b>
<i>Public University</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$4,500</i>
<i>Private College/ University</i>	<i>\$500</i>	<i>\$4,500</i>
<i>State College</i>	<i>\$400</i>	<i>\$3,600</i>
<i>Community College</i>	<i>\$250</i>	<i>\$2,250</i>

## **Scholarship Notification:**

The ECE Scholarship is a multi-agency, collaborative initiative. Applicants are first required to complete the FAFSA online ECE Scholarship application. Once you have completed the online application, your information is received and reviewed by OSFA. Specifically, OSFA verifies the following information from your application:

1. You have completed your FAFSA (OSFA cannot process your application without this form);
2. You are a Massachusetts resident;
3. You are a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen;
4. You are not in default on any previous state or federal student loans and do not owe a refund on any previously received federal or state financial aid;
5. You do not hold a prior bachelor's degree;
6. You are matriculated at an eligible institution of higher education in Massachusetts;
7. You are enrolled in an associate's, bachelor's program in early education and care or a related field;
8. You are in good standing at your institution of higher education;
9. You have been working in the field for at least one year from the date of the priority deadline for a minimum of 20 hours per week; and
10. Your supervisor has completed the supervisory portion of the scholarship application.

### **Ineligible Applicants:**

If you are found not eligible by OSFA, you will receive notification of your ineligibility once your application has been processed.

### **Eligible Applicants:**

If you have met the requirements verified by OSFA, your application will be sent to EEC for further review and verification. Specifically, EEC verifies the following information:

1. You are currently working in a paid position in an EEC licensed or authorized program;
2. You are currently working in a position that is acceptable for the scholarship program;

3. You continue to work in an EEC licensed or authorized program while earning your degree;
4. You are registered in EEC's Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) and have an **active** PQR number.
5. Once you have been approved by both OSFA and EEC, OSFA will contact the institution of higher education listed on your application to verify your enrollment information.

### Who do I contact if I need help with my...

- FAFSA
  - Visit [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov)

**OR**

- Contact your local college/university

**OR**

- Contact Jean Szymaniak at the Office of Student Financial Assistance 617-391-6083 or [Jean.Szymaniak@mass.gov](mailto:Jean.Szymaniak@mass.gov)
- My scholarship notification (sent by email) or payment to my college/university:
  - Contact Jean Szymaniak at the Office of Student Financial Assistance 617-391-6083 or [Jean.Szymaniak@mass.gov](mailto:Jean.Szymaniak@mass.gov)
- My employment information and eligibility:
  - Allison Comport at the Department of Early Education and Care 617-720-8513 (direct line) or [Allison.Comport@mass.gov](mailto:Allison.Comport@mass.gov) or EEC's main number at 617-988-6600.

### QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS:

**1. Do I need to apply for the scholarship every year?**

*Yes, for each year that you would like to receive assistance from the scholarship program you are required to complete the FAFSA and the ECE Scholarship application.*

**2. When will the 2020-2021 ECE Scholarship application be available?**

*The 2020-2021 ECE Scholarship application will be available on April 1, 2020. Individuals interested in applying for the ECE Scholarship should complete the FAFSA in preparation for the scholarship application. The FAFSA is available at [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov).*

**3. What is the deadline to apply for the 2020-2021 ECE Scholarship application?**

*The deadline is June 1, 2020.*

**4. What does it mean to be matriculated?**

*A matriculated student has been accepted for admission to the college, has registered, and is pursuing courses toward a degree.*

**5. What is an eligible non-citizen?**

*You are considered an eligible non-citizen if you meet ONE of the following criteria:*

- *You are a U.S. permanent resident with an Alien Registration Card (I-551).*
- *You are a conditional permanent resident with an I-551C card.*
- *You have an Arrival Departure Record (I-94) from the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) with any of the following designations:*
  - *Refugee*
  - *Asylum Granted*
  - *Parole*
  - *Cuban-Haitian Entrant*
  - *A citizen of the Republic of Palau, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Federated States of Micronesia*

**6. Have the ECE Scholarship eligibility requirements changed for the 2020-2021 academic year?**

*Registration in [EEC's Professional Qualifications Registry](#) remains a requirement. This requirement is still in effect and all other requirements for the scholarship have remained the same.*

**7. What is a Professional Qualifications Registry (PQR) ID number? Is this a requirement of the ECE Scholarship?**

*If you are currently working in early education or out-of-school time in an EEC-licensed center-based program or family child care home in Massachusetts, you will need to register to have an active PQR account.*

**8. What is considered to be a "related" field?**

*To be eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program, applicants must be enrolled in an associate's, bachelor's degree program in early childhood education or a related field. Related fields include: child development, elementary education, child guidance, human services, psychology, physical education, recreation, child psychology, the arts, social work, and sociology.*

**9. If I am approved for the scholarship when will I receive my award?**

*Once an applicant is approved by both OSFA and EEC, OSFA will contact the college listed on your application to verify that you are a matriculated student, enrolled in an eligible degree program, in good academic standing, and the number of credits indicated on your ECE Scholarship application. Once the college submits verification of your enrollment status to OSFA, payment will be made to the college. As a rule,*

most colleges will complete the verification process after the Drop/Add date ends for registration – which could be three weeks after the semester begins.

**10. I have already paid my bill for the semester, or my bill is due before I hear about my scholarship determination. What should I do?**

*If you have already paid your semester bill, you should contact your bursar's office for a reimbursement once the school has received your scholarship award. If your bill is due prior to the scholarship approval you should contact the bursar's office at your institution and/or the financial aid office. Many schools allow students to begin classes prior to payment of tuition but withhold credit until the tuition is paid.*

**11. I have a bachelor's degrees in an unrelated field, am I eligible for this program?**

*No, having any bachelor's degree in any field disqualifies you from participating in the program. If you hold a bachelor's degree in an unrelated field and are looking for additional coursework in early childhood education you may be able to find coursework on [EEC's Online Professional Development Calendar](#) and [StrongStart Professional Development Centers \(PDC's\)](#). The Professional Development Centers (PDC's) are tasked with providing professional development and coaching support to the early care and education field throughout Massachusetts. PDC grantees are tasked with providing professional development opportunities and services which support adults to gain knowledge and skills which they can apply to practice through completion of multiple learning opportunities.*

**12. Are staff working in EEC licensed or authorized school age child care programs eligible for this scholarship program?**

*Yes, individuals working in an EEC licensed or authorized school age program are eligible.*

**13. Are paraprofessionals currently employed in public schools eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program?**

*Public school paraprofessionals that are working in an EEC authorized (preschool) program are eligible to participate in the ECE Scholarship Program. There is a separate grant program, the [Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program](#), designed specifically for paraprofessionals who wish to become certified as full time teachers. This program is available to paraprofessionals working with all age and grade levels within public schools. Individuals cannot participate in both programs.*

**14. Are staff living in another state but working in an early education and care program in Massachusetts eligible for this scholarship program?**

*No, applicants must be legal Massachusetts residents for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year.*

**15. Are staff living in Massachusetts but working in an early education and care program in a neighboring state eligible for the scholarship?**

*No, applicants must be working in Massachusetts in an EEC licensed or authorized program to be eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program.*

**16. I have not been at my current place of employment for at least 1 year, but I have been in the field for at least 1 year. Am I eligible for the scholarship?**

*If you have not been at your current place of employment for at least 1 year but have previously worked in an EEC licensed or authorized program within the past 6 months you are still eligible for the ECE Scholarship. Your previous employment information should be included in the "Proof of Employment/ Professional Recommendation" section of the application. If you have not been in the field for at least 1 year then you are not eligible for the ECE Scholarship at this time.*

**17. Is there a minimum number of hours each week I must be employed in Early Education and Care to be eligible for this program?**

*Legislation requires that applicants have demonstrated a commitment to the field. OSFA and EEC have the ability to question whether an applicant who is working very limited hours has demonstrated the required commitment. Currently, recipients are required to work a minimum of 20 hours per week.*

**18. Are substitutes eligible to receive scholarship funding?**

*The ECE Scholarship program is intended for staff that has made a commitment to the field, substitutes who work in early education and care programs on an occasional and infrequent basis are not eligible. Staff who substitute often, for example, some child care programs have regular or permanent substitutes and meet the other scholarship requirements are eligible.*

**19. What if I have previously defaulted on a state or federal student loan?**

*If you have previously defaulted on a state or federal student loan then you are not eligible for the ECE Scholarship Program. However, you do have the ability to change your default status. Please contact the agency that services your loan, or your college financial aid office for more information.*

**20. What expenses is the scholarship intended to cover?**

*The amounts awarded are intended to fund tuition and fees but may also include funding for related expenses such as textbooks.*

**21. If I do not use any or my entire scholarship award will it carry over to the next semester?**

*No, scholarship funding does not carry from one semester to the next. Recipients are only awarded an ECE Scholarship for courses/credits for which they have indicated on their ECE Scholarship application and have been certified as eligible by the school.*

**22. If I do not use my fall scholarship, am I still eligible for my spring award?**

*Spring awards for ECE Scholarship recipients who do not register for courses for the fall semester or are not able to be certified by the college for a fall award, are automatically cancelled. Recipients must notify OFSA in writing of plans to enroll for*

*the spring semester as soon as possible. Scholarship funds are not guaranteed for the spring semester.*

**23. Can the ECE Scholarship be used to support master's level coursework?**

*No, at this time the ECE Scholarship does not support graduate/masters level coursework.*

**24. I am my own supervisor; who should complete the supervisor portion of my application?**

*If you are a family child care provider or center director and you do not have an immediate supervisor, a current or former parent of the child care program, or staff person with whom you work with from a Family Child Care System, Child Care Resource and Referral Agency, or a Coordinated Family and Community Engagement (CFCE) grantee program may complete the required supervisor section of your application.*

**25. What happens if I change colleges or employment during the course of the scholarship?**

*ECE Scholarship recipients are required to notify EEC and OSFA in writing if there are any changes to their personal information, employment, or college. If a recipient changes college during the course of the academic year, there is no guarantee that funding will be available to support a greater award amount. Changes in information should be sent to Jean Szymaniak at [Jean.Szymaniak@mass.gov](mailto:Jean.Szymaniak@mass.gov) or Allison Comport at [Allison.Comport@mass.gov](mailto:Allison.Comport@mass.gov).*

**26. Does a preliminary award notification from OSFA ensure that I will receive the ECE Scholarship?**

*No, EEC verifies work history and PQR status for each applicant before final approval. Following EEC's review, OSFA verifies enrollment with your higher education institution. Scholarship awards may be cancelled or adjusted, based on the verification information received from the institution.*