

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATORS (ECE) SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA)

Student Guide

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 a **certificate, associate's, bachelor's, or master's degree** program in the Early Childhood Education or After School/Out-of-School Time field.

Eligible Majors:

Early Childhood Education, Child Development, Family Studies, Child Care Administration, or fields that directly name early child development and its specific areas of inquiry.

Eligible **graduate/master's programs** include these same categories as well as Early Childhood Research, Policy, and Practice; Education Entrepreneurship; and Learning Sciences.

Scholarship Questions:

Q: Who is eligible for the ECE Scholarship?

To be eligible for the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship, an applicant must:

- Meet Massachusetts residency requirements
- Be a U.S. Citizen or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations
- Have a current year FAFSA on file (must be completed annually)
- Not be in default of any federal or state Student Loans for attendance at any institution or owe a refund for any previous financial aid received.
- Students must either be pursuing their **first bachelor's degree** or pursuing a **master's degree** in an approved program, as defined above under "eligible majors".
- Be enrolled in an eligible institution as listed on OSFA's website: [Office of Student Financial Assistance / ECE Scholarship](#)
- Be employed, *for at least six months and work at minimum 20 hours per week*, as an educator or provider in an early education and care program or out of school time program that is licensed or authorized by the **Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (DEEC)** *and continue employment in this field while pursuing the approved course of study.*
 - If you have been at your current place of employment for less than 6 months** but have previous work history at another licensed EEC facility that has been documented on your ECE application, this will be taken into consideration.
- Sign an agreement to continue employment as an early educator or provider in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, with the expectation that the student will continue to be employed in the Early Childhood Education field as an educator or provider in Massachusetts for six months per semester of scholarship receipt, not to exceed a two-year maximum commitment upon graduation from an associate's degree program and a four year maximum commitment upon graduation from a bachelor's degree program.

Q: How do I apply for the Early Childhood Educators Scholarship and what information will I need to complete it?

- ❑ Must have a current FAFSA on file. If you need to complete your federal application, please do so at [Home | Federal Student Aid](#)
- ❑ To apply to the ECE Scholarship you will need to log into the [MASSAid Student Portal](#).
 - If it is your first time logging into the MASSAid system, you will need to create an account.
 - The ECE Application is located under the main tab and is labeled “**Grants/Scholarship Online Applications**”

Please note that it takes at least **72 hours from the time a student’s FAFSA is processed to upload to the MASSAid system.*

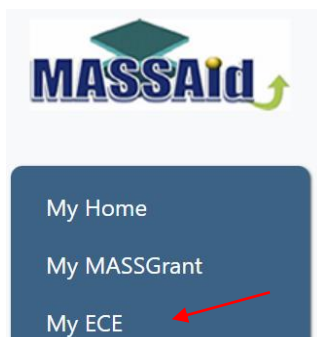
- ❑ Students must have an up-to-date PQR number [Massachusetts EEC Professional Qualifications Registry](#) this is your unique account number and represents your professional profile.
- ❑ Students must have a valid ECE program number (must be employed as an educator or provider in an early education and care program or out of school time program that is licensed or authorized by DEEC - **Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care**)
- ❑ At the end of the application, you will be provided with the **ECE Proof of Employment Form (POE)**. **This form will need to be fully completed and signed by your supervisor.** Your ECE application will remain incomplete until your POE is submitted via the upload feature in MASSAid.

→IF YOU ARE SELF-EMPLOYED/OWNER OF DAYCARE: Please report your information under “CURRENT EMPLOYER/SUPERVISOR” and submit your application. The system will recognize that student information and employer information match and will request that you certify your self-employment.

- Once the form is completed, you will need to log back into the MASSAid student portal and upload your documentation. (In an effort to become paperless, please **DO NOT** mail and/or fax your documentation)
- Students do receive a confirmation email, after submitting an ECE application, with additional information regarding the scholarship process.

Q: How do I upload my POE form and/or re-print my POE?

1. Log into the [MASSAid Student Portal](#)
2. Click on the tab labeled “**My ECE**”:



3. Click on “Upload Proof of Employment”:

Proof of Employment Form: [Click here to update 2023-2024 application information](#)

CURRENT INSTITUTION: BRIDGEWATER STATE UNIVERSITY
FALL ANTICIPATED CREDITS: 3
SPRING ANTICIPATED CREDITS: 3
SUMMER 1 ANTICIPATED CREDITS: 7
SUMMER 2 ANTICIPATED CREDITS: 7

Re-Print Application Re-Print Proof Of Employment
Upload Proof of Employment

4. To view your uploaded POE, click on the tab labeled “My Forms”

5. Please note that an OSFA administrator must manually review all proof of employment forms which may take up to **72 hours** depending on the volume of applications received. Until your form is reviewed and approved or denied, your ECE record will be flagged for “No Proof of Employment on File”. *The system does not automatically mark your POE as received.*

Q. What happens after my proof of employment (POE) form is approved by OSFA?

After OSFA has approved your proof of employment form, and *if there are no other discrepancies* on your account that need to be resolved, your application will go into a pending review status with the Department of Early Education and Care.

EEC is required to verify reported work history, which involves reaching out to supervisors, as well as verification of a student’s PQR number and ECE program number.

Q. What if I have another ineligible reason on my ECE account? (EX. Citizenship, Not a MA resident, etc.)

Students can click on ineligible reasons for further information

- Employment Requirement not met:** If you do not meet the 6-month work requirement and/or are working less than the required 20 hours per week, your account will be flagged.

If you have been at your current place of employment for less than 6 months but have previous work history at another licensed EEC facility that has been documented on your ECE application, this will be taken into consideration. Please keep in mind that these accounts are manually reviewed after a proof of employment form is submitted - the OSFA administrator will review all previous work experience reported on the application and approve accounts that meet eligibility requirements.

- Citizenship Status:** When a student fills out a FAFSA (federal application), their information gets sent to the Social Security Administration to verify their citizenship. If this gets flagged at the federal level, then it will also reflect at the state level (OSFA). This issue must be cleared with the financial aid office at the institution. When resolved, the FA office can manually go into the MASSAid system and remove this flag.
- Student/Parent not a MA resident:** All students must meet Massachusetts residency requirements for state financial aid; that is one full year of MA residency prior to the start of the academic year. The information reported on your FAFSA helps to determine this (license, address, legal state of residence, and date of residency). If any of this information conflicts with residency in Massachusetts, the student will have to submit documentation, via the MASSAid Student Portal. The appropriate OSFA administrator will review submitted documentation, per residency reply form requirements, to determine whether the student meets residency guidelines.

If you are an **independent student** [Dependency Status | Federal Student Aid](#), your parents’ residency **WILL NOT** be taken into consideration.

- ❑ **Not approved by DEEC:** The Department of Early Education and Care will not approve a student’s application if they cannot confirm employment information, PQR status, and eligible EEC program number corresponding to your place of employment.

There may be other ineligible reason(s) flagged on your account – please click on the listed reason(s) in the MASSAid student portal for further guidance

Q: Do I need to reapply every year?

Yes! Students need to reapply every year they wish to be considered for ECE Scholarship funds.

Q. When does the ECE application become available and when is the deadline?

The ECE application typically becomes available on April 1st for the following academic year and remains open until August 1st. Please note that application dates are subject to change - always check OSFA’s website for updated application information [Office of Student Financial Assistance / ECE Scholarship](#)

Q. What happens if I change employers or my institution during the academic year?

Students must notify OSFA and ECE, in writing, of any changes in employment. Please send all updated information via email to Stephanie Perez at OSFA, Sperez@dhe.mass.edu and Sarah Sian at EEC, Sarah.C.Sian@mass.gov.

If there is a change in your institution, please contact Stephanie Perez at OSFA, Sperez@dhe.mass.edu.

Q. Are paraprofessionals employed at Massachusetts public schools eligible to apply to the ECE Scholarship?

Students who are working as a paraprofessional in an EEC authorized program (preschool) are eligible to apply to the ECE Scholarship.

Paraprofessionals working in a K-12 Massachusetts public school (in a non-EEC authorized program) and wish to become licensed teachers, may be eligible to apply to the Paraprofessional Teacher Preparation Grant Program (PTPG). Students can review program eligibility requirements on OSFA’s website: [Office of Student Financial Assistance / Paraprofessional Grant](#). Students cannot participate in both programs.

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

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, will automatically have their spring funds cancelled. Schools must request a reinstatement of an ECE award for any student who enrolls for the spring semester via the MASSAid system; requests for reinstatement are reviewed by OSFA later in the semester and are approved based on the availability of funding.

Q. How will I find out if I am eligible or ineligible for the ECE Scholarship?

Eligible Applicants: If you have met the requirements verified by OSFA, your application will be sent to EEC for further review and verification. If approved by DEEC, a student will be flagged as eligible and will receive an award notification, via email, from the Office of Student Financial Assistance. *Scholarship amounts are based on a per credit rate, depending on the type of institution as provided below:*

Institution Type	Maximum Award Amounts
University of Massachusetts	\$500 per credit, maximum of \$4,500 per semester
Private College/University	\$500 per credit, maximum of \$4,500 per semester
State University	\$400 per credit, maximum of \$3,600 per semester
Community College	\$250 per credit, maximum of \$2,250 per semester

Ineligible Applicants: Ineligible notifications begin late July and are sent via email to students. All students will be sent two notifications and will have 21 days from the *date of their first email* to resolve all ineligible discrepancies from their account. Students will be notified on rolling basis as OSFA continues to receive applications.

ECE Scholarship Application at a Glance

Student

- Must fill out current year FAFSA
- Complete an ECE application via MASSAid Student Portal.
- Applicants receive confirmation email with additional information from OSFA after submission of ECE application.
- Upload completed proof of employment (POE) form, signed by supervisor, via MASSAid Student Portal to complete application.



OSFA

- Determines eligibility based on ECE application and FAFSA information.
- Reviews POE form within 72 hours of upload and will approve or deny.
- Students may have other ineligible reasons on their ECE record based on their FAFSA, ECE application, and other state financial aid requirements.
**All ineligible reasons must be resolved before moving on to DEEC review.*



DEEC

(Department of Early Education and Care)

- Verifies employment information for all applicants that have been approved by OSFA.
- DEEC will check PQR and ECE program numbers, and follow up with all supervisors to confirm place of employment and work hours meet program eligibility requirements.
- Students will either be approved or denied by DEEC



OSFA

- Students *approved* by DEEC will receive an award letter from OSFA.
- Students that have been denied by DEEC will receive notification of their ineligible status.

School

All eligible students will appear on an electronic roster at participating institutions (via MASSAid.)

- At a date determined by OSFA, institutions will begin to certify eligible students on their campus in order for ECE scholarship funds to be disbursed. This happens separately for both the fall and the spring semester.
- Certification includes: confirming enrollment status, number of credits, and that the student meets all requirements for federal (FAFSA) and state financial aid (OSFA)

OSFA

- All students that have been certified as eligible by the school will go into a 'ready to pay' status allowing our office to generate payments.
- Disbursement of **fall funds** will be made as early as mid-September, *pending certification*, and will continue through the end of the semester.
- Disbursement of **spring funds** will be made as early as mid-January, *pending certification*, and will continue through the end of the semester.