

Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG)

Taking the right high school classes could pay off!



Academic Competitiveness Grants (ACG) were developed by the federal government to help high school students get ready for college by encouraging them to take challenging high school classes - making success in college more likely. This grant program is different from many other federal grant programs because grant recipients must prove that they successfully completed challenging high school courses in addition to meeting financial need requirements. The following information will provide you with details on the Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG) and how it may help you pay for college. Remember to work with your high school counselor when setting up your course schedule. Taking the right courses in high school could really pay off in college!

ACG Eligibility Requirements

Academic Competitiveness Grants are available to students who take challenging courses in high school and who meet the following eligibility requirements:

- U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Federal Pell Grant recipient for the same award year
- Completed a rigorous secondary school program of study (after January 1, 2006, if a first-year student, and after January 1, 2005, if a second-year student)
- Received a high school diploma or certificate of completion if home-schooled
- Enrolled at least half time in the first or second year of an undergraduate degree or certificate program at a two-year or four-year degree-granting institution
- A first-year student who was previously admitted to an ACG-eligible undergraduate program while in high school qualifies if he/ she was above compulsory school attendance age upon admission
- A second-year student also must have a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 3.0 on a 4.0 scale at the end of the first academic year
- Must not be in default on a federal student loan or owe an overpayment on other federal student aid

Award Amounts

Eligible recipients will be awarded:

- Up to \$750 for first-year students
- Up to \$1,300 for second-year students

Recognized Rigorous Programs of Study a.k.a Challenging High School Courses

In addition to the eligibility requirements, Iowa high school graduates must have completed one of the following three options recognized as Iowa rigorous programs of study, with passing grades, in order to qualify for the ACG:

Option 1.

To qualify for this option, students must have passing grades in the following courses:

- Four years of English
- Three years of math (including Algebra I and a higher level course such as Algebra II, geometry, or data analysis and statistics)
- Three years of science (including one year each of at least two of the following courses: biology, chemistry and physics)
- Three years of social studies
- One year of a language other than English

Option 2.

To qualify for this option, students are required to take a minimum of two Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) courses while in high school and achieve a minimum passing score on the exams for those classes. Students must score 3 or higher on AP exams and 4 or higher on IB exams.

Iowa College Student Aid Commission

200 10TH ST FL 4TH • Des Moines IA 50309-3609

Phone: 877-272-4456 • Fax: 515-725-3401

Email: info@iowacollegeaid.gov • Website: www.iowaCollegeAid.gov



Your Financial Aid Connection

Option 3.

Option 3 is similar to option 1 which was previously described, but offers some flexibility in fulfilling certain coursework requirements.

- Four years of English
- Three years of math (3 years includes, but is not limited to, the following selection or comparable courses: Algebra I, Algebra II, geometry, integrated math I, integrated math II, integrated math III, trigonometry, pre-calculus, calculus, statistics)
- Three years of science (3 years includes, but is not limited to, the following selection or comparable courses: biology, chemistry, physics, anatomy/physiology, earth/space science, astronomy, general science, environmental studies, integrated sciences)
- Three years of social studies
- One year of foreign language OR three courses in a career and technical sequence

Students who graduated from high school in a state other than Iowa can check the rigorous programs of study for their state at www.ed.gov/admins/finaid/about/ac-smart/state-programs.html.

Are Home-Schooled Students Eligible?

Yes, as long as the student meets all eligibility requirements. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) must provide the college or university with certification of high school completion and also provide documentation that the student completed the rigorous program requirements. This documentation may include a transcript (or equivalent) or a detailed course description listing secondary school courses completed by the student.

How Do I Apply?

Complete and submit a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as soon as possible after January 1 of your senior year of high school. If you complete the FAFSA online (www.fafsa.ed.gov), you will have the opportunity to answer questions that will help determine your ACG eligibility.

If you submit a paper FAFSA you will need to call the Federal Student Aid Information Center at [1-800-4FED-AID](tel:1-800-4FED-AID) to determine your ACG eligibility.

You also may contact the financial aid office at your college or university to determine your ACG eligibility.

* You may take two or more qualifying courses at the same time. For example, a year-long language arts course taken simultaneously with a year-long creative writing course equals two years of English.



Your Financial Aid Connection

Iowa College Aid provides free information and resources to Iowa families interested in pursuing education opportunities beyond high school. Planning, preparing, and paying for college is less confusing if you are well informed. If you have any questions please contact us. We will connect you to the information and resources you need to make college a success! You may reach us at:

Phone: 877-272-4456

Email: info@iowacollegeaid.gov

Website: www.IowaCollegeAid.gov

Course Check List

Use this handy guide as a checklist to ensure you meet all of the course requirements. If a course you plan to take is not listed below, talk to your counselor to see if it will qualify.

4 years* of high school English including but not limited to:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts | <input type="checkbox"/> Composition |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> American Literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Fundamentals of Writing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | |

Total Years of English Courses _____

3 years* of high school math including Algebra I and higher level courses including but not limited to:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Algebra I (required) | <input type="checkbox"/> Algebra II |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geometry | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Calculus |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Calculus | <input type="checkbox"/> Trigonometry |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Statistics | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Total Years of Math Courses _____

3 years* of high school science including one year each of at least two of the following courses:

- | | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Biology | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------|

Other high school science classes including but not limited to:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Earth Science | <input type="checkbox"/> Human Anatomy/Physiology |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Geology | <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Astronomy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Total Years of Science Courses _____

3 years* of high school social studies including but not limited to:

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> U.S. History | <input type="checkbox"/> Western Civilization |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economics | <input type="checkbox"/> Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Sociology | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

Total Years of Social Studies Courses _____

At least one year of a language other than English such as:

- | | | | |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spanish | <input type="checkbox"/> French | <input type="checkbox"/> German | <input type="checkbox"/> Italian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Latin | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | | |