AOKY & Ability to Benefit Guidelines

Ability to Benefit (AtB), allows GED® seeking students who are enrolled in approved career pathway programs to received federal financial aid (Pell).

Key Points:

- In order for a student to be eligible for AtB, they have to be enrolled in an AOKY program that meet both Ability to Benefit guidelines and regular Pell requirements.

- Students can receive under AtB in one of two ways:
  1. Meet a cut score on an approved AtB test
     - KCTCS will use the Compass test through October 2015.
  2. Successfully complete six credit hours in classes that are part of a pathway

- Students can only use their federal funds for courses that are part of the AOKY pathway leading to a credential.
  - Example: A student working towards their Tack Welding certificate can only use their federal funds in the courses required for the Tack Welding certificate.
    - The only exception are for students attending a college where a college success course (such as FYE 105) is a mandatory requirement for all students.

- Students are considered an AtB student until they earn their GED®. Once they earn their GED, they become a “regular Pell” student.

- AOKY programs have to meet pathway requirements in order to qualify for AtB/Pell funding.
  - Credentials students earn in AOKY have to be a minimum of 16 credit hours, or
  - Be embedded in a credential that is at least 16 credit hours offered at that college

- A college has to submit the AOKY Program Proposal to the state AOKY coordinator to determine AtB eligibility. If the proposal meets the AtB requirements, a copy will be sent to the Financial Aid office to certify its eligibility.

- AtB students have to be concurrently enrolled in adult education and at the college.

- AtB students should be enrolled at the college as a conditionally admitted student.
  - Note, at this point, KCTCS policy only allows students without a secondary credential to be enrolled for one semester.
**Ability to Benefit Guidelines:**

Meeting Ability to Benefit (students who have not obtained a high school diploma or its equivalency) COMPASS score requirements\(^1\) of Math 25, Reading 62, Writing 32; COMPASS/ESL Grammar/Usage 64, Reading 70, Listening 70; or satisfactorily complete six credit hours or the equivalent coursework, applicable toward a degree or certificate offered by the institution making the determination. Students meeting ability to benefit and seeking federal financial aid funds must be enrolled in an eligible career pathway defined as:

- Concurrently enrolls participants in connected adult education and eligible postsecondary programs;
- Provides counseling and supportive services to identify and attain academic and career goals;
- Provides opportunities for acceleration to attain recognized credentials or degrees;
- Provides structured course sequences that are contextualized and allow students to advance to higher levels of education and employment;
- Is organized to meet the needs of adults;
- Is aligned with the education and skill needs of the regional economy;
- Has been developed and implemented in collaboration with partners in business, workforce development, and economic development

**Pell Grant Guidelines:**

A program is considered eligible for financial aid if it meets the following criteria:

- Minimum length of 15 weeks
- Minimum of 16 credit hours or 600 clock hours (total length of the program)
- Program must lead to a credential such as an associate’s degree, diploma or certificate that qualifies for Gainful Employment (*FSA Handbook, 2-16*)
- The basic list of general eligibility requirements students must meet to receive a Pell Grant:
  - Submission of an official FAFSA with all discrepancies resolved
  - Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) determined on the FAFSA that indicates they have financial need.
  - Have not completed any degree greater than or equal to a bachelor’s degree
  - Has a valid social security number
  - Registered with Selective Service (for male students between the ages of 18 and 25)
  - Meeting SAP standards
  - Has a high school diploma or recognized equivalent, such as a GED, or meets the new Ability to Benefit (AtB) standards

Once a student’s eligibility is confirmed and they are enrolled in an eligible program, the amount of Pell grant awarded in a given semester or enrollment period is based on their EFC and final enrollment status for that payment period.

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\(^1\) COMPASS can only be used through October 2015 as an Ability to Benefit test. Guidelines will be updated with new AtB test once those have been determined.