



GOLDEN STATE TEACHER GRANT (GSTG) PROGRAM FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

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Eligibility

If I received a GSTG award before and did not receive the full \$20,000, can I apply again?

No, you may only apply for the GSTG once, for the initial year you'd like to receive the grant. Commencing with the 2022-23 academic year, the GSTG can be paid out over multiple academic years if you continue to meet eligibility. The total amount of all your GSTG awards cannot exceed \$20,000.

If you received a GSTG award for less than \$20,000, we will work with your institution to determine if you are eligible for a renewal of your GSTG application for the remaining funds. Do not submit an additional application.

Is my institution/program eligible?

Professional preparation programs approved by the Commission on Teaching Credentialing (CTC) that have a main campus location or administrative entity in California, including programs operated by California Local Education Agencies (LEAs), are eligible.

For a current list of CTC-approved professional preparation programs, please visit <https://www.ctc.ca.gov/commission/reports/data/approved-institutions-and-programs>. Remember, only those located in CA may be eligible.

Are teacher induction programs eligible?

No, students enrolled in induction programs are not eligible for the GSTG.

Are Designated Subjects Career Technical Education (DS CTE) programs eligible?

No, DS CTE programs are not eligible for the GSTG. DS CTE programs are not considered "professional preparation programs."

Are integrated/blended programs eligible?

Yes, integrated programs (BA, MA, and Education Specialist) meet the CTC-approved criteria for a professional preparation program. If you are enrolled in the integrated program and working towards your degree and preliminary teaching credential or pupil personnel services credential, you are eligible to apply and receive funds at any time you are enrolled in the program.

IMPORTANT: GSTG recipients must complete their programs and obtain their credentials within 3 years of the first distribution of GSTG funds. As integrated programs may take longer than 3 years to complete, you should consider applying for the GSTG when you are within 3 years from completing your program and obtaining your credential to avoid repayment.

If I already hold a credential but am returning to school to earn a second credential, am I eligible?

There are two levels of credentials issued by CTC – “preliminary” and “clear.” Teaching credentials can be issued as either preliminary or clear, while pupil personnel services (PPS) credentials are only issued as clear.

As required by statute, all GSTG recipients must be enrolled in a professional preparation program that leads to earning their preliminary teaching credential or PPS credential.

Refer to the below table for additional guidance.

Current Credential	Credential Pursuing	GSTG Eligibility	Reason
None	Teaching	Eligible	Your initial teaching credential will be issued as preliminary.
None	PPS	Eligible	You will be issued a PPS credential.
Preliminary Teaching	Additional Teaching	Eligible	Your additional teaching credential will be issued as preliminary.
PPS	Additional PPS	Eligible	You will be issued an additional PPS credential.
Clear Teaching	Additional Teaching	Ineligible	Your additional teaching credential will be issued as clear.
Clear/ Preliminary Teaching	PPS	Eligible	You will be issued a PPS credential.
PPS	Teaching	Eligible	You will be issued a preliminary teaching credential.

Are DACA students eligible?

Yes, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) students are eligible for the GSTG Program. However, you must also be AB540 eligible to receive state aid, obtain an ITIN to receive your credential from CTC, and have valid work authorization to complete your service requirement. Not receiving your credential and/or not completing your service requirement will result in failure to meet program terms and require the repayment of any GSTG funds disbursed to you.

Also, remember to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) (if applicable) prior to submitting the GSTG application.

Are AB540 students eligible?

Yes, AB540 status students are eligible for the GSTG Program. However, you must obtain an ITIN to receive your credential from CTC and have valid work authorization to complete your service requirement. Not receiving your credential and/or not completing your service requirement will result in failure to meet program terms and require the repayment of any GSTG funds disbursed to you.

Are international students eligible?

No, international students do not qualify for federal or state financial aid, including the GSTG.

Non-immigrants granted one of the following visas do not qualify for AB 540 status, unless they hold a TPS or U Visa, to be granted a California nonresident exemption and receive state aid: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, O, P, Q, R, S, TN, TD, V, TROV, and NATO.

Do students enrolled in pupil personnel services (PPS) preparation programs have to earn their credential?

Yes, all GSTG recipients must complete their professional preparation program and obtain their credential within 3 years of the first distribution of GSTG funds.

Application

Is the FAFSA/CADAA required?

Yes, the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) or [California Dream Act Application \(CADAA\)](#) (if applicable) is required for all GSTG applicants, including those attending Local Education Agencies (LEAs) and Cal Grant ineligible schools.

What do I do if my institution is not listed on the FAFSA/CADAA?

Please reach out to your institution's GSTG Coordinator for school selection. Once complete, download your Student Aid Report (SAR) and provide it to your institution so that the necessary information can be obtained and your GSTG application can be processed.

For a list of GSTG Coordinators by institution, please visit the [GSTG Program website](#).

How can I check my application status?

You can check your application status at any time through your [GSTG student portal](#). Select "View Application Status" under the "Student" menu.

Can I make changes to my application?

Yes, most information on your GSTG application can be updated except for your social security number, name, date of birth (DOB), and email address. To make the changes, please log into your [GSTG student portal](#). Once logged in, please select “New/Update Application” located under the “Student” menu.

If you need to make changes to your social security number or DOB, and/or email address, please contact us at goldenstateteachers@csac.ca.gov.

If you need to change your name, provide two copies of identification and email them encrypted to goldenstateteachers@csac.ca.gov.

What does it mean if my application status is “Pending Review?”

“Pending Review” status means your application is waiting to be reviewed by your institution. Your institution will verify your eligibility for the GSTG Program and determine your award amount.

Please contact your institution’s GSTG Coordinator for a status as we cannot process your award until your institution’s review is complete. For a list of GSTG Coordinators by institution, please visit the [GSTG Program website](#).

What does it mean if my application status is “Waiting SA?”

“Waiting SA” status means we are waiting for you to accept your Service Agreement (SA). To accept your SA, log into your [GSTG student portal](#). Once logged in, select the “Service Agreement” link located under the Student menu and then the appropriate academic year from the drop-down menu.

What does it mean if my application status is “Signed SA?”

“Signed SA” status means we received your accepted Service Agreement (SA). At this stage, there is nothing additional required from you. Your application status will remain as “signed SA” until your payments processed are equal to your award amount.

Unless otherwise specified by your institution, your grant will be evenly disbursed among all terms you are enrolled during the academic year. Institutions may begin requesting payments for each term according to the following timeline:

- Fall – August 1
- Winter – November 1
- Spring – January 1
- Summer – April 1

Please allow approximately 6-8 weeks from the date your institution requests payment for your check to arrive at your school.

What does it mean is my application status is “Paid in Full?”

“Paid in Full” means that the Commission has processed payments equal to the award amount determined by your institution. This does not necessarily mean that all payments have been mailed, just that they are processed/in processing.

Please allow 6-8 weeks for the check(s) to arrive at your institution from the date they request the payment(s).

After I submit my application, what happens?

After you submit your application, your institution will verify your GSTG Program eligibility and determine your award amount. If you are determined to be eligible, you will receive an email notification prompting you to log into your [GSTG student portal](#) to review and accept the Service Agreement (SA). Please check your junk/spam folder frequently, as the notification may end up in there. You may also choose to occasionally log in to the portal to check if your SA is available to accept.

Your institution cannot request your payment(s) until you accept your SA. Unless otherwise requested by your institution, your grant will be evenly disbursed among all terms you are enrolled during the academic year.

Institutions may begin requesting payments for each term according to the following timeline:

- Fall – August 1
- Winter – November 1
- Spring – January 1
- Summer – April 1

Please allow approximately 6-8 weeks from the date your institution requests payment for your check to arrive at your school.

Payment

How will I know my award amount?

Your GSTG Program award amount for the academic year is listed on your Service Agreement (SA). To view your SA:

1. Log into your [GSTG student portal](#).
2. Select “Service Agreement” located under the Student menu.
3. Select the academic year you accepted the grant for in the “Acad Year” drop-down menu and select search.
4. Scroll to the bottom of the Service Agreement to view the “Award Details” section.

When will I receive my award?

Your institution can request your payment(s) after you accept your SA. Unless otherwise requested by your institution, your grant will be evenly disbursed among all terms you are enrolled during the academic year.

Institutions may begin requesting payments for each term according to the following timeline:

- Fall – August 1
- Winter – November 1
- Spring – January 1
- Summer – April 1

Please allow approximately 6-8 weeks from the date your institution requests payment for your check to arrive at your school.

What can I use my GSTG award for?

GSTG funds can be used on any academic-related expense, including the cost of living. Please contact your institution's GSTG Coordinator for more information regarding their disbursement policies.

For a list of GSTG Coordinators by institution, please visit the [GSTG Program website](#).

Will I have to claim the GSTG on my taxes?

The GSTG award amount should be included on your annual 1098-T form if the grant was directly applied to your tuition and fees by your institution. It is recommended that you speak with a tax professional for any tax inquiries beyond this information.

Service Obligation

Is there a service obligation in exchange for the GSTG funds?

Yes, all GSTG recipients must commit to work at an eligible priority school in California for four years within eight years of the date they complete their professional preparation program.

The commitment is documented in the [Service Agreement \(SA\)](#). No funds are awarded until the SA is accepted by the participant.

What is the Service Agreement (SA)?

The [SA](#) outlines your obligations, including repayment requirements, under the provisions of the grant. The SA will be available for you to review and accept immediately after your institution confirms your GSTG eligibility and determines your award amount. The SA must be accepted within 30 days.

To accept your SA, log into your [GSTG student portal](#). Once logged in, select “Service Agreement” located under the “Student” menu and the appropriate academic year from the drop-down menu.

What is a priority school?

A “priority school” is a CA public school that provides instruction in any grade K-12 with more than 55 percent of pupils who are classified as an English learner, eligible for a free or reduced-price meal, or current foster youth. Priority schools are not the same as Title I schools.

The priority school list is compiled by April 15 annually using data submitted via CALPADS to the California Department of Education (CDE) by each public California school. The lists of priority schools are available on the [GSTG website](#). Nonpublic schools are not eligible as they do not report data to CDE.

When determining which list to refer to, you may use either the priority school list published for the year you initially received the GSTG or the list published for the school year you are seeking new employment for after completing your professional preparation program.

Can my school be added to the priority school list?

The priority school list is compiled annually using data submitted via CALPADS to the California Department of Education (CDE) by each public California school. Nonpublic schools are not eligible as Education Code 44395(a) limits high-priority schools to school districts [further defined in Education Code 44395(e)(1)] or charter schools.

If the school in question is not on the current GSTG Priority Schools List, it did not meet the parameters of a priority school for the academic year. If the data for the school changes to meet eligibility, it will be added at the next annual publishing.

Will the time I spent working at a priority school prior to completion of my program count towards my service obligation?

The 4-year service obligation begins once you complete your professional preparation program. Any time spent working prior to completing your program and obtaining your credential is not counted towards the obligation.

I am employed by a community-based organization and work at multiple school sites. Will my service count towards my 4-year obligation?

You must work at a priority school for 4 years within 8 years of the date you complete your professional preparation program. As stated in Section IV of the [Service Agreement \(SA\)](#), 1 year of service will be counted if:

- You complete eligible service for at least one-half of the school year.
- Your employer deems you to have fulfilled your contractual requirements for the school year for the purposes of salary increases, probationary or permanent status, and retirement.

How will I report my service towards my obligation?

The Commission will send an annual Employment Verification Form to the email address listed on your application. If you need to update your email address, please contact goldenstateteachers@csac.ca.gov.

You will receive your first form in May the year after you received your initial GSTG payment. For example, if you received your initial payment for the 2021-22 academic year (AY), you will receive your first form in May 2023 to capture any service you may have completed during the 2022-23 AY.

Repayment

Do I have to repay the entire award if I work at a priority school for less than 4 years?

The Service Agreement (SA) outlines your obligations under the provisions of the grant. As stated in the SA, your 8-year timeframe to complete your 4-year service obligation will begin when any of the following occur:

- No longer meet satisfactory academic progress (SAP)
- Complete your professional preparation program
- Withdraw from your professional preparation program
- Fail to complete your program and obtain your credential within 3 years after the first distribution of GSTG funds

Upon your 8-year deadline, for every year your service obligation is not met, you will be required to repay 25% of your total awarded amount. For those years your obligation is met, no repayment will be necessary.

So, if your obligation is met for:

- 1 year = Repay 75% of the awarded amount
- 2 years = Repay 50% of the awarded amount
- 3 years = Repay 25% of the awarded amount
- 4 years = No Repayment, obligation complete

You will have the option to repay in a lump sum or enter into a 4-year repayment plan.

Do I have to pay interest?

No, you will not be charged interest. If you fail to meet your obligations and are placed on a repayment plan, you will be required to repay only the funds awarded.

Do I have to repay or find a new job if my school is removed from the priority list?

No, if your school falls off the list, you will be grandfathered eligibility as long as you remain employed there.

If I know I will not be able to fulfill GSTG Program requirements and want to repay my award now, what do I do?

If you still have the original check and would like to return it to us, please:

1. Do not write anything on the check.
2. Write a note that includes your:
 - a. Full name
 - b. CSAC ID
 - c. Explanation about why you are returning the GSTG funds
3. Mail the check and note together to:
Program Administration and Services
P.O. Box 419027
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9027

If you have deposited the original check, but would like to repay the funds in a lump sum or enter into a 4-year repayment plan, please email goldenstateteachers@csac.ca.gov.