

DATE:	April 17, 2025
SUBJECT:	Highest Ranking Graduate
CATEGORY:	Tuition Waiver
NEXT STEPS:	Share with principal and/or lead counselor

Overview

The Highest Ranking Graduate (HRG) program provides a tuition waiver for students graduating at the top of their high school class for their freshman year of college. In accordance with [Texas Education Code \(TEC\), §54.301](#), the Texas Education Agency (TEA) provides an opportunity for each public and accredited non-public high school in Texas to identify a student to award a "Highest Ranking Graduate" certificate and tuition waiver document. These documents must be presented to the highest-ranking graduate in the senior class.

Under no circumstances may a student ranked lower than "highest" be awarded this honor.

Each local school board should adopt and adhere to a policy that outlines the criteria and the method to select one student as their HRG to receive the tuition waiver. The methodology for determining the HRG is a decision that rests strictly with the local school district. State law contains no provision that designates the Commissioner of Education or the TEA as the decision-making authority in this area.

Please visit the [HRG frequently asked questions](#) page for additional information regarding the award. Each high school may award only one student except in the case of a tie, as specified in the Attorney General's opinion below:

An institution of higher education is authorized to issue scholarships to more than one person in any case in which the relevant school district certifies a tie for the title of "highest ranking graduate," pursuant to Section 54.201 of the Texas Education Code, (TEC). [Op. Atty. Gen. 19892-No. MW-529](#) (PDF).

***Please note TEC §54.201 was re-designated §54.301 by the 82nd Legislature.**

Although this opinion authorizes the issuance of more than one certificate in the event of a tie for "highest ranking graduate," the criteria for identifying such students must be stringently applied. It is the district's responsibility to establish a selection process to identify the single "highest ranking graduate." In rare cases in which more than one student meets the district's criteria for selection, two certificates may be issued; however, in no event will more than two certificates be issued for one high school.

TEA will send the superintendent and principal separate correspondence detailing the process for completing the certificate and tuition waiver document.

The HRG should present the tuition waiver document to a college or university upon admission and may retain the certificate for personal use. The HRG tuition waiver document authorizes the president

of any state-supported college or university to provide a waiver for tuition in accordance with [TEC §54.301](#).

Questions

For additional questions, please submit an [HRG Help Desk ticket](#).