

## American Degree Information

- **Requirements for the American FFA Degree**
  - Hold the State FFA Degree
  - Have been an active member of the FFA continuously for at least the immediate past 36 months
  - Have satisfactorily completed at least three (3) years of systematic secondary school instruction in agricultural education (540 hours), or have completed all the agricultural education offered in the school last attended
  - Have been out of high school for at least twelve (12) months prior to the convention at which the degree is granted
  - Have in operation an outstanding supervised agricultural experience program, which must show comprehensive planning, continuation, growth, and increase in scope with records to substantiate such accomplishments.
  - Since entering agricultural education have earned at least \$10,000 and productively invested at least \$7500; or earned and productively invested \$2,000.00 and worked 2,250 hours in excess of scheduled class time. Any combination of hours, times a factor of 3.56, plus actual dollars earned and productively invested must be equal to or greater than the number 10,000. Hours used for the purpose of producing earnings reported as productively invested income shall not be duplicated as hours of credit to meet the minimum requirements for the degree.
  - Have a record of outstanding leadership abilities and community involvement and have achieved a high school scholastic record of “C” or better as certified by the principal or superintendent.
  - Have participated in at least 50 hours of community service, within at least three different community service activities. These hours are in addition to and cannot be duplicated as paid or unpaid SAE hours.
  
- To qualify for the American FFA Degree, student work must be agriculture related. The following types of employment do NOT count toward the American Degree:
  - Placement at a non-agriculture retail store
  - Babysitting
  - Work as a waiter, host, or cashier at a restaurant
  - The student’s description of his/her placement must make clear that it is an agriculture related placement if there is any question or doubt
  
- American Degree applications must be completed online. Applications may be accessed through AET or the student’s Ag Career Network (AgCN) account. Below are instructions for accessing the application through AET:
  - Go to [www.theaet.com](http://www.theaet.com) and login using information provided by the Advisor
  - Click on the “Reports” tab
  - Click on “Degree and Application Manager”
  - Go to “Add New” and select “American Degree”
  - Once the application is complete and all items on the checklist show as met, the student can print the cover page of the application
  
- The student will need to ensure that all signatures are on the cover page of the application. The cover page should be mailed to the Executive Secretary by March 1<sup>st</sup>.

## American Degree Guidelines

1. The student must be a high school graduate and have received his or her State Degree at least one year prior to applying for the American Degree.
2. If the application is being submitted in 2015, all numbers in the degree MUST END December 31, 2014. Applications that count hours or work from 2015 will be disqualified.
3. On the basic setup page, the student should give special attention to section V.
  - a. Any cash gifts received during the course of the SAE should be listed on line Va
  - b. Any income from ag related work that is not part of the SAE should be listed on line Vb
  - c. Line Vc should include all taxes paid, personal expenses, etc. It is very important that the student correctly accounts for personal expenses. A zero on this line is a red flag that the application is not completed correctly
  - d. Line Vd should include all educational expenses taken out. Educational expenses can only be for post-secondary education. If educational expenses are claimed, the student MUST show that he/she is attending college on the application
4. The application should outline the student's project EACH YEAR.
  - a. Please give as much information about the scope of the project as possible. "Lawn Care-6 residential and 2 commercial accounts," is a good description.
  - b. List enterprises separately. So if the student had pigs, sheep, and cows, each species would go on a separate line with a separate descriptor.
5. All SAE activities included in the application must be related to agriculture. Babysitting, retail work not related to agriculture, working as a grocery cashier, waiter/waitress, or restaurant host/hostess is not considered agriculture related by National FFA and will not count toward the requirements of the degree.
6. SAE Placement & Exploratory should only include PLACEMENT work. List the job title/type of work, the unpaid and paid hours, the gross earnings, and expenditures. Do not include taxes as an expenditure.
  - DO NOT list anything that the student owns under placement.
  - DO NOT list hours that were worked on the home farm in exchange for feed or equipment on a project the student owns.
  - DO NOT list unpaid hours for a project the student owns under placement.
7. SAE Entrepreneurship is to list information about projects the student owns. The more thorough the description the better. A good example would be "I raised and sold 12 cross-bred calves. These calves were born on the farm and raised to 400 pounds on grass. I exchange labor with my father for pasture and use of his facilities."

8. Asset pages should only include inventory that the student owned. Closing inventory should only include items the student owned on December 31<sup>st</sup> of the previous year. If the application is being submitted in 2015, the numbers would be what the student owned on December 31, 2014.
9. It is still acceptable to count a portion of a personal vehicle as inventory. The vehicle should be listed as “Machinery, Equipment, and Fixtures” Only the portion of the vehicle that is used for the project should be counted. Examples:
  - a. a student who mowed lawns and owned a 1979 Chevy Pickup that was used exclusively in the lawncare business would list: “1979 Chevy Pickup- Valued at \$3000 and used 100% in business” and then count the full value of the truck.
  - b. a student who worked at Southern States who owned a 1998 Toyota Camry would list: “1998 Toyota Camry- Valued at \$2000 and used 25% for work” and would then count 25% of the value.

Note: Few personal vehicles are used more than 50% for the SAE. Only the rare farm truck would count as 100%. A student can count the additional value of his/her vehicle as a non-productive personal asset.

10. ATV’s should be listed on inventory only if they are directly related to the SAE. If the ATV in question is used 50% for the SAE and 50% for recreation, the value should be listed accordingly. **Seldom is an ATV used entirely for agriculture purposes.** A student who has a placement project can **NOT** count the value of an ATV toward his or her project.
11. Land should be valued at the purchase price. Land should not show appreciation in value on the American Degree Application.
12. The income and expense summary must show realistic income and expenses for the project described. Please note the following:
  - a. Cash sales are necessary for any business enterprise to succeed. Cash sales would include the sale of any crops, non-breeding livestock, and/or income from their ag related business.
  - b. If labor is exchanged for operating expenses, this must be documented. The value of the non-cash items received should be shown on line 1f and 2d. Typically these lines should match.
  - c. A student must show expenses that are consistent with what they are producing. Total expenses for 100 acres of corn cannot be \$0.
  - d. Section 4 is meant to list capital items such as breeding animals, equipment, etc. The student must show where these items came from by listing them as a purchase. Capital items (other than a few breeding animals) do not go up in value, so large amounts of appreciation for these items should not be shown.
  - e. If a student inherited or was given a tractor, a cow, a farm, etc, this should be shown on line 4c.
  - f. Generally, a student should not have large numbers on line 4h for any year of the project. In fact, these numbers should be zero or negative if the application is completed correctly.

- g. Line 5 shows the student's return for each year of the project. These numbers should be in line with what the student said he/she was doing on the SAE description. In other words, total returns for 4 cow/calf pairs should not be \$20,000 per year. This is a flag that something is wrong with the application.
  - h. In the case that a student has odd numbers for a legitimate reason, the advisor should attach an advisor's statement explaining these numbers. Examples could include a fire that killed the student's animals, a death in the family, or income from a Grand Champion Steer at the State Fair.
13. Any money the student owes should be counted as a liability.
14. A student must have work in two separate community service activities for a total of 50 hours. The activities must clearly be community service. "Taylor County Fair" does not qualify as community service. "Volunteered to park cars at Taylor County Fair" does qualify as community service.
15. Be sure that everything on the checklist is MET. If errors exist that you cannot correct, please call the Executive Secretary.