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# Introduction



*This volume of the Federal Student Aid Handbook discusses the eligibility requirements for students and parent borrowers and your responsibilities to ensure that recipients qualify for their aid awards.*

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## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

There are many factors that you must consider when reviewing a student's application for aid from the FSA programs, such as whether the student is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, whether the student is making satisfactory academic progress, and whether the student has a defaulted FSA loan. To answer these questions you receive information about the student from several different sources, including the Department of Education's Central Processing System (CPS) for financial aid applications and the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS).

Throughout the year the Department provides updates to schools in the form of Dear Partner/Colleague Letters. These letters and other information, such as Federal Register notices and announcements containing system updates and technical guidance, are available on the *Information for Financial Aid Professionals* (IFAP) website ([www.ifap.ed.gov](http://www.ifap.ed.gov)).

Schools using software from the Department also receive other materials that explain how the software operates, such as technical references, which are available on the FSA Download website (see the margin). The FSA Handbook doesn't cover the operation of specific pieces of software. Schools using third-party software should consult the vendor's reference materials for technical guidance.

## RECENT CHANGES

Several definitions in the regulations were moved to the general provisions section, 34 CFR 668, and some of those were modified. For example, the definition of a half-time student no longer appears in the Pell regulations, and because it now falls under the general definitions, it applies to all the Title IV programs. See the margin note on p. 11. For a complete list of the definitions so affected, see the *Federal Register* dated November 1, 2007, on the IFAP website.

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## Program and systems information online

### [www.fsadownload.ed.gov](http://www.fsadownload.ed.gov)

Software:

- Direct Loan Tools
- EDconnect
- EExpress for Windows
- SSCR for Windows

Technical References and User Guides for:

- CPS (ISIR, Summary of Changes, Renewal FAFSA Process Guides, etc.)
- COD
- Electronic Data Exchange
- EExpress Packaging

### [www.ifap.ed.gov](http://www.ifap.ed.gov)

- Federal Registers
- Electronic Announcements
- Dear Partner/Colleague Letters
- FSA Assessment modules:  
Student Eligibility—  
[www.ifap.ed.gov/qahome/qaassessments/studentelig.html](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/qahome/qaassessments/studentelig.html)

Satisfactory Academic Progress—  
[www.ifap.ed.gov/qahome/qaassessments/sap.html](http://www.ifap.ed.gov/qahome/qaassessments/sap.html)

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## Title IV policy questions

For questions about federal student aid policies, contact the Research and Customer Care Center:  
[fsa.customer.support@ed.gov](mailto:fsa.customer.support@ed.gov) or 1-800-4ED-SFAP. When referring students to the Department of Education, please have them call 1-800-4-FED-AID.

New regulations codify and supplement the requirement that first-academic-year students must not have been previously enrolled in an ACG-eligible college program while yet in high school. On page 64 we note that now, in addition, students must not have been at or below the age of compulsory school attendance.

On page 65 we give guidance pertaining to regulations about getting documentation for students who do or do not self-identify as being potentially eligible for ACG funds.

There have been questions about what successful completion of a rigorous program means. Recent regulations clarify this, which is explained on page 66.

We added a margin note on page 66 about the new ability that schools have to suggest that a major be added to the list of those eligible for National SMART grants.

On page 67 we added a paragraph explaining the contents of Dear Colleague Letter GEN-07-07: to receive SMART grant funds, students must be enrolled in at least one course that advances the student toward the completion of her eligible major; enrollment in general education classes is not sufficient.

Also on that page, we give more details, based on new regulations, about the monitoring of a student's eligible major for a National SMART grant.

Recent regulations explain two topics related to ACG and National SMART grants: how to calculate GPA for transfer students and what equivalency policies are for schools that do not normally use a traditional 4.0 grading scale. These policies are necessary for determining whether students meet the GPA requirements of the two grant programs. See the amended text on pages 68 and 69.

We added the definition of a professional degree on page 71, and because the definition of graduate or professional student was moved in the regulations, we give the new location on the same page.

In 2007 the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) became law, and one of its provisions established a new Title IV grant: the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher education (TEACH) grant. This grant is introduced on pages 81 and 82, and Dear Colleague Letter GEN-08-01 discusses more of the CCRAA.

If you have any comments regarding the FSA Handbook, please contact Research and Publications via e-mail at [fsaschoolspubs@ed.gov](mailto:fsaschoolspubs@ed.gov).