
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.

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 colleague letters (DCLs). These and other releases, 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).

The FSA Handbook doesn't cover the operation of software. For schools using software from the Department, there are technical references on the FSA Download website (see the margin) that explain how the software operates. Schools using third-party software should consult the vendor's reference materials for technical guidance.

RECENT CHANGES

Some of the changes for 2010–2011 are from The Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA) of 2008, as well as the technical corrections legislation from July 1, 2009. As a result of the Student Aid and Fiscal Responsibility Act, we removed references to the FFEL Program. Other changes are a result of comments from other government agencies and inquiries we received.

The HEOA defined “diploma mills” for postsecondary education. We included that definition on page 7.

Another result of the HEOA, one that became effective July 1, 2010, is that an alternative method was added for students with drug convictions to regain eligibility for Title IV aid: if they successfully pass two unannounced drug tests administered by an authorized rehabilitation program; see page 15.

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Program and systems information online

www.fsadownload.ed.gov

Software:

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

Technical References and User Guides for:

- CPS (ISIR, Summary of Changes, etc.)
- COD
- Electronic Data Exchange
- EDEExpress Packaging

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

Satisfactory Academic Progress—
www.ifap.ed.gov/qahome/qaassessments/sap.html

Title IV policy questions

For questions about federal student aid policies, contact the Research and Customer Care Center:
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.

We revised the guidance on page 18 to note minor changes like the re-designation of telecommunications courses as distance education courses.

We noted in the margin on page 21 that a parent signature may sometimes appear in place of a minor child's signature on citizenship documents.

We also added a margin note to page 23 explaining how the Child Citizenship Act of 2000 affects children born abroad, including adopted foreign-born children, who did not acquire citizenship at birth.

On pages 23–25 we introduced a section on battered immigrants under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), and we reorganized slightly the guidance on victims of human trafficking.

On page 37 we added that citizens of the Freely Associated States, who are eligible for Pell grants, are also eligible for Academic Competitiveness and National SMART grants.

We reorganized, added to, and corrected the text and images on page 42.

We revised the guidance on total and permanent disability discharges on page 49 to reflect the new regulations that became effective on July 1, 2010.

We revised and added text on page 60 to emphasize that when students are clearly not required to register with the Selective Service System and you have documentation of that, they do not have to request a status information letter from the SSS. We also state what types of documentation you should look for when the exempt student is an eligible noncitizen.

Because the SSS has a backlog of status information letter requests, there have been delays in responding to them. We advised in the margin of page 62 what you can do.

On page 65 we noted in the chapter introduction that 2010–2011 will be the last year for the ACG and National SMART Grant programs.

We added on page 74 a section on the student eligibility requirements for receiving a second Pell grant in an award year. For a full treatment of how two Pells must be awarded, see Volume 3.

We also added a section on the new Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant that was introduced in the technical corrections bill. This is on page 75.

We clarified the final paragraph of text under TEACH grant agreement to serve on page 86.

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