Introduction

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This volume of the Federal Student Aid (FSA) 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 you must consider when reviewing an application for aid from the FSA programs, such as whether the student is a U.S. citizen or permanent resident, whether the applicant is making satisfactory academic progress, and whether he or she has a defaulted FSA loan. To answer these questions you receive information about the student from 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 of Education (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 HIGHLIGHTS

Here are some of the significant changes to *Volume 1* for the 2015-16 award year:

Chapter 1:

- Added reference to the OPE website with guidance on checking foreign diplomas.

- Added note on upcoming career-pathway program provision for gaining eligibility.

- Added reference to OPE website with guidance on recognized equivalent of a high-school diploma. Added example illustrating recognized equivalent guidance.

Program and systems information online

www.fsadownload.ed.gov
Software:
- Direct Loan Tools
- EDconnect
- EDExpress for Windows
- SSCR for Windows

Technical References and User Guides for:
- CPS (ISIR, Summary of Changes, etc.)
- COD
- Electronic Data Exchange
- EDExpress 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

Questions about FSA policies

E-Announcement Nov. 15, 2013
For questions about Federal Student Aid policies and programs, call the new "*Reach FSA*," phone line at 1-855-FSA-4-FAA (1-855-372-4322). *Reach FSA* will help you determine the appropriate call center for your question, and then transfer you to that call center.

FSA Coach

ANN-13-21
FSA Coach, a self-paced, comprehensive online guide to the Title IV programs, has been updated for domestic schools. For more information, see:
http://www.ifap.ed.gov/ifap/fsacoach.jsp
COACH for foreign schools will be updated in the future; monitor IFAP for forthcoming training announcements.

Questions or comments?

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

- Guidance on recognized equivalents of a high school diploma expanded.

- Revised guidance for students in local and county jails, penitentiaries and correctional facilities, as described in DCL GEN-14-21: students in local correctional facilities may be potentially eligible for FSA aid.

- Clarification of Defense of Marriage Act Decision and related guidance in DCL GEN-14-14.

Chapter 2:

- Guidance on UCSIS's retirement of red ink on certain documents added.

- Alien registration number/ARN corrections and additions guidance expanded and updated.

- Sidebar added: reminder not to initiate the G-845 process without evidence of eligible noncitizen status.

- Sidebar added on I-94 website.

- Chapter updated to include new G-845 guidance. The new G-845 form is included, and replaces the old version, effective immediately.

Chapter 3

- Revised and expanded guidance on unusual enrollment history.

- Total and permanent disability sidebar updated, disability discharge website reference addded, regulatory citations clarified.

Chapter 6

- Added sidebar regulatory and statutory citations for the prohibition on Pell Grant awards for concurrent enrollment.

- Added note on Career pathway program Pell eligibility route, w/ HEA & DCL sidebar citations.

- Updated the potential eligiblity for incarcerated students guidance per the changes in DCL-14-21, added DCL citation and website reference for incarcerated students eligibility FAQ.

- Clarification on requirement to offer Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans to all qualified borrowers, and Direct PLUS Loans to all qualified parents and graduate/professional students.

- Revised adverse credit history provisions described, sidebar with citations added, including counseling requirements for certain borrowers.