Slide 1 - Instructions
This presentation contains audio and closed caption features.
Each slide is paused on entry. Use the navigation bar to: advance through the presentation, manage the audio and mute options, and launch or hide closed captions. The navigation bar can be accessed using a mouse or a combination of the space bar and the enter key.

Slide 2 - Title Slide
Hello and thank you for joining us for an overview of the Pennsylvania State Grant Program's Academic Progress requirements

Slide 3 - Agenda
The purpose of this presentation is to supplement information presented in Chapter 2, Section D of the State Grant Program Handbook for the 2018-19 Academic Year and the 2019 Summer. During this presentation we will discuss the Academic Progress requirement of the program.
First we will review the regulation and some basic academic progress policy. We will then go through the PHEAA-recommended steps to complete the Satisfactory Academic Progress Review and highlight a number of considerations to be aware of when performing SAP reviews.
At the end of this presentation, we will provide some resources that will help you manage the program.
You should note that this presentation will serve as an overview of the printed material and should be used in conjunction with the written procedures to ensure your full understanding of and compliance with all State Grant Program policies. Also, since our presentation will focus solely on this topic, we encourage you to review the other Handbook presentations and print materials at your convenience. A copy of the Handbook can be found on our training webpage. We will provide the web address at the end of the presentation. Let’s begin with some Academic Progress basics.

Slide 4 - Academic Progress Basics
Pennsylvania code 1 21.5 8 states “A higher education grant recipient must make normal progress from year to year in order to retain higher education grant eligibility.” This regulation authorizes PHEAA to make the final decision in all matters pertaining to academic progress.
Our requirements may differ from those used for Federal aid and from the school’s standards; however, you must apply the standards set by PHEAA when considering the student’s eligibility for State Grant aid.
PHEAA generally defines academic progress as follows: For each academic year during which State Grant aid is received, a student must successfully complete the minimum number of credits or clock hours appropriate to the student’s enrollment status starting with the first term for which State Grant aid was received.

PHEAA’s Academic Progress policy uses a quantitative measure of successfully earned credits, and, unlike other models, does not include qualitative measures such as GPA.

The Academic Progress check requires that the school review the most recent year the student was awarded a state grant within the last 10 years. If the last award was over 10 years ago, no review for academic progress is needed. Schools must verify that during the last year when the state grant was awarded, the student completed the minimum number of credits or clock hours commensurate with the State Grant award and enrollment for the year.

When conducting the academic progress test, schools should note that only credits earned beginning with the first term during which State Grant aid is received can be included in the review.

This means that credits earned in terms prior to the receipt of the State Grant awards under review do not count toward academic progress. We will provide greater detail on when to begin the progress review later in the presentation. To better explain how schools can complete the Academic Progress check for returning students, we have broken the requirements into a number of steps. Let’s begin our review of these steps with the next slide.

**Slide 5 - Step 1: Select a Yearly Cycle**

First schools must choose a specific time each year to review all students for academic progress. PHEAA offers two options.

The first option is for the school to check all students after completion of the Spring term. In this case, the Summer term would be considered a “header” to the academic year. The school that verifies progress after Spring would have to do so prior to certifying Summer eligibility.

The second option is to check all students after the Summer term. The Summer term is often an opportunity for a student to make up deficient credits from the preceding academic year in order to be eligible for the subsequent Fall term.

Once the school makes a selection of when progress will be verified, this test must be applied at the same point in time annually to all State Grant recipients and documented within the school’s policy manual. This information will be requested during a program review, to confirm that the evaluation of the academic progress review has been properly applied. Therefore, you must contact PHEAA if your school should need to change your academic progress review cycle. Also as mentioned previously, a school must review all students for progress beginning with the
first term that the student received State Grant aid, which means that credits earned prior to receiving a State Grant cannot be counted.

To better illustrate the requirement, we have provided the example on this slide. The assumption in this example is that the school operates on a semester schedule and checks progress after Spring. In this example, the student enrolled half-time in Summer 2017, did not receive a State Grant, and completed 3 of the 6 credits attempted. In the Fall 2017 term, the student did receive a full-time State Grant for enrolling in 12 credits. Upon the completion of the term, only 9 of the 12 credits were earned.

During the following Spring 2018 term, the student was awarded a full-time State Grant, attempted and earned 12 credits. However, when the school checks progress at the end of the Spring term, the student must be reported as failing to meet progress because the minimum number of credits for the 2 full-time awards were not successfully earned.

Since the first term in which the student received a State Grant was Fall 2017, the review can only include the 9 credits earned during Fall, and the 12 earned during Spring. The 3 credits earned during the preceding Summer term cannot be included in the progress test.

**Slide 6 - Determine Whether to Review and Gather Transcripts**

Because PHEAA requires a progress evaluation for any student who has received a State Grant within the last 10 years, schools will need to review the last 10-year period to determine the most recent year that the student was awarded a State Grant. If the last award was over 10 years ago, no review for academic progress is needed. So that schools can view this historical data, PHEAA provides a number of resources to find prior grant information. The first source is the State Grant disbursement roster. On the roster, under each student, you will see the label “prior terms” which provides up to the last 6 terms of prior awards. In the prior terms field of the roster, there will be a letter code which represents each term, “F” for Fall, “W” for Winter, “S” for Spring and “R” for Summer. Next to this letter will be two digits representing the year the student received the State Grant award. If you see the abbreviation “HST,” that represents ‘History’ and means that the most recent State Grant was given to the student over 10 years ago.

The next step is to gather the transcript information. Once the transcript information has been gathered, verify the number of successfully earned credits for eligible students. When verifying the number of credits earned using transcript information, there are some considerations. Students who have repeated courses, have earned credits for remedial courses, or are transferring credits from another institution are subject to additional policies within the academic progress review.

We will touch upon those considerations in a few slides.
Slide 7 - Check Academic Progress

After reviewing the transcript information for the number of successfully completed credits, the next step is to check the State Grant Progress. To verify that a student has met the progress standard for State Grant, compare the number of credits earned during the review cycle with the minimum credits required commensurate with the State Grant award status for each awarded term. This chart, found in section 2D of the handbook, displays the minimum number of credits or clock hours that must be successfully completed for each State Grant award received for the term.

For a semester school, a student would need to successfully earn at least 12 credits or 450 clock hours for each full-time State Grant received. A half-time award recipient at a semester school would need to earn a minimum of 6 credits or 225 clock hours. A student at a quarter school would need to successfully earn at least 12 quarter credits, 8 semester credits, or 300 clock hours. Half-time award recipients at a quarter school would need to earn no less than 6 quarter credits, 4 semester credits, or 150 clock hours. Schools should note that when the student meets the definition of full-time for State Grant enrollment purposes, a school may not reduce eligibility to half-time to satisfy the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirement. For similar reasons, schools should also not retroactively report a remedial exception for a completed term where the student has failed to earn the regular credits that were initially used to determine eligibility. Let’s review some examples of how to check progress on the next few slides.

Slide 8 - Example: Made Progress

This example illustrates a semester school that reviews progress for all students after Spring and assumes that the student in question was not enrolled in remedial or repeat courses during the review period. The student on this slide earned 9 of the 12 attempted credits in Summer 2017 and received a full-time State Grant.

In Fall 2017 the student earned 12 of the 15 attempted credits and received a second full-time award. During the Spring 2018 term, the student attempted and earned 15 credits and was awarded a third full-time State Grant. When the school checks after Spring, the student passed the progress test, having earned all 36 credits needed for the three full-time awards received during the cycle.

Slide 9 - Example: Lack of Progress

The example in this slide also assumes a semester schedule, no remedial or repeat courses, and that progress is evaluated after the Summer term. In this example, the student was enrolled full-time in Fall of 2017 with 12 credits, received a full-time State Grant award and earned all 12 credits.
In the following Spring, the student enrolled full-time for 12 more credits, receiving another full-time State Grant award, but only earning 9 of the 12 attempted credits. During the Summer 2018 term, the student enrolls half-time for 6 credits, received a half-time State Grant award and earned all 6 credits.

When the school checks progress after the Summer semester, the student would have needed to complete a total of 30 credits; 24 for the two full-time awards and 6 for the one half-time award. In this case, only 27 of the total 30 credits were earned. Therefore this student does not meet the Academic Progress standard.

Now that we have covered how to review progress, let’s discuss how to manage the results of the Academic Progress test.

**Slide 10 - Report Lack of Progress**

If the student passes the progress test, no additional action is required. However, report to PHEAA if the student does not pass the State Grant Progress test. When reporting lack of progress, schools have two options; either report for the Fall only or report for all subsequent terms.

This reporting, which must be completed either via Partner Interface or Certification Transmission, removes the award and replaces it with a reject “P” code for each reported term. On Partner Interface you can reject term awards for lack of progress on a student-by-student basis using the Single Update or report multiple students using the Mass Update function. The image on this slide illustrates the Single Student “Cancel or Reinstate” drop-down option.

To reject a single student’s award for lack of progress, select the Academic Progress Reject option for the desired terms from this display. The Mass Update function on Partner Interface allows you to reject awards for lack of progress in quantities of up to 100 students. To report all of your students electronically at once, you can use the Transmissions process. More information on Partner Interface, including the State Grant Partner Interface User Guide is available on the pheaa.org training page. If your school would like to sign up to use Transmissions, contact us using the email provided at the end of the presentation.

**Slide 11 - Re-evaluate and Report Changes**

Schools must reevaluate students rejected for lack of progress on a term-by-term basis to determine if the student has made up the deficient credits and therefore is State Grant eligible for the next awarded term. Once it is established whether or not the student has earned enough credits to meet the progress standard, the school may need to report changes to the student’s reject status, depending on if the cancellation was for the entire year or for the Fall term only.

If the student made up the credit deficit, then the awards for the subsequent terms will need to be reinstated only in the case that the school had chosen to cancel awards for the entire year. If
the student did not make up the credits required to pass Academic Progress, then the school will need to update the eligibility status for Winter or Spring, to reflect the reject status depending on if cancellation was for the entire year or if the school opted to cancel the Fall term only.

Let’s review some examples.

**Slide 12 - Examples: Steps 5-7 (Cancel Entire Year)**

This example illustrates a school that rejected the students’ award for lack of progress after the annual review, by cancelling all subsequent terms. Upon end-of-term re-evaluation, which in this example, occurs after Fall, no action is needed for a student who did not make up the deficient credits.

However, the school reinstated the Spring term award for a student who made up a 3-credit deficit during the Fall term. In this case, the final result is that the student remained ineligible for the Fall term and was awarded for the Spring term.

**Slide 13 - Cancel Fall Only**

In the second example, the school canceled the Fall term only after the initial progress review. When the school initially evaluated a student for academic progress, the student was short 3 credits. Upon end-of-term re-evaluation after the Fall term, the student had not earned the 3 credits deficit. The school must take action for this student by rejecting the Spring term award for lack of progress. If the student had made up the 3 credits, then no action would be needed, since only the Fall term had been rejected.

As mentioned previously, there are a number of considerations to include when checking for Satisfactory Academic Progress. Let’s review a few of them, starting with the application of repeated courses.

**Slide 14 - Considerations: Repeat Courses**

Generally students will repeat a course if they have failed it previously. However, some students will repeat passed courses so that they can earn a better grade, particularly if the grade is required for the student’s major.

When considering repeat courses during the review for State Grant Satisfactory Academic Progress, only count successfully completed credits or clock hours once. Therefore if a student has passed a course and already counted the credits toward progress, the course cannot be counted again if the student repeats the course in a subsequent term.

Repeat courses which were previously failed, however, can be counted if they are successfully completed upon a subsequent attempt.
The example on this slide is for a semester school that checks progress after the Spring term and the student has not taken remedial courses during the review period.

In the example, the student was not enrolled in the Summer 2017 term. Instead the progress review starts the following Fall term when the student is enrolled for 12 credits, receiving a full time award. The student successfully earned all 12 credits for Fall 2017. In the Spring 2018 term, the student enrolls in 12 credits, three of which were from a repeat Fall class. The student receives another full-time award, once again completing all 12 credits.

When the school checks at the end of the Spring term, the student must be rejected for lack of progress. Of the 24 total credits needed for the two full time awards, the student could only apply 21 toward progress. The reason for this is that the one 3-credit course that was taken in both the Fall and the Spring terms can only be counted the first time it was successfully completed which was in the Fall.

**Slide 15 - Considerations: Remedial Credits**

Remedial credits can be used to meet academic progress standards, but only when the student needs to make up a progress deficit for awarded terms in which a remedial exception was reported. This means that not only must the student have received a remedial exception during the awarded terms included in the progress review, but it also means that the remedial credits can only be included if there have not been sufficient regular credits earned to make progress.

Schools should also keep in mind that a remedial exception can only be requested for terms in which the student does not enroll in sufficient regular credits to meet the minimum enrollment requirement and that the number of remedial credits cannot exceed the number of regular credits. This rule applies for both enrollment and academic progress purposes.

The example on this slide assumes that the school operates on a semester schedule and checks progress after the summer term.

In the example the student enrolls in 3 regular and 3 remedial credits for Summer 2017, receiving a half-time state Grant and remedial counter. The student successfully completed all 6 credits. In the Fall 2017 term, the same student took 15 credits; 12 regular and 3 remedial. The student received a full-time State Grant and did not need a remedial exception for the term. During Fall 2017, the student only completed 9 regular and 3 remedial credits. Then in Spring 2018 the student enrolled in and successfully completed 12 regular and 3 remedial credits, and again did not require a remedial exception.

When the school checks at the end of Spring, the student did not meet progress. The student needed 30 credits of which no more than 3 credits may be remedial. The student earned a total of 24 regular credits and 9 remedial credits for 33 credits. However since only one remedial
exception for half time enrollment was reported, only 3 remedial credits can be counted toward progress.

Again, a remedial exception may not be retroactively applied for terms where the student has failed to earn regular credits that were initially used to determine eligibility, so that the student may meet the academic progress standard.

PHEAA realizes other extenuating circumstances may prevent a student from meeting the State Grant academic progress standard. On the next slide we will discuss the form used to request an exception to the progress rule for such situations.

Slide 16 - Considerations: Other Exceptions

The Academic Progress Exception Form can be used by those students who have extenuating circumstances such as medical conditions that have prevented them from successfully earning the required number of credits for a term.

When requesting an exception, the student may print the form from PHEAA.org, complete the student section, and sign the form. The student must then have the Financial Aid Administrator at the school where progress was failed complete their required portion and submit the completed form along with all supporting documentation.

PHEAA reviews all appeals but does not guarantee that the exception request will be approved. If the exception request is approved, the student will be notified by letter and an activity of the letter will be documented. Schools can view the exception approval in both the student’s activity log and the Academic Level field on the “Award Tab” in Partner Interface.

In order for these students to retain State Grant eligibility, they must resume successful completion of the minimum number of credits appropriate to their enrollment and award status. Schools must then re-evaluate the student for progress after the excepted term. If the student fails to meet the State Grant progress standard, the award for the following term must be rejected for lack of progress.

Slide 17 - Considerations: Transfers (Not Visiting)

A transfer student in general terms is a student that attended one school and then for a subsequent term has decided to attend a different school.

To assist schools in identifying State Grant eligible transfer students, PHEAA provides the “Last Award Different School” or “LADS” on rosters. This designation means the last term prior to the disbursement reflects enrollment and eligibility at a different school, which may be a different branch of the same school. Please keep in mind that the LADS messaging is dependent on the point in time at which PHEAA produces the disbursement roster.
When a student begins at your school, but is unable to provide documentation of previous credits earned during the last year awarded, then you should not credit the State Grant. You will need to reject the student’s award until the student can either verify previously earned credits or earn them at your institution.

Please keep in mind prior credits do not need to be transferable to your school and must be earned at another State Grant approved or Federal Title IV eligible postsecondary institution.

You should also keep in mind that when reviewing academic progress, any remedial exceptions and repeat courses used during the review period should be considered during the evaluation. This information could have an impact on the student’s State Grant eligibility at your school.

While Academic Progress reviews are required for all incoming transfers, the timing of when the initial review is completed will depend on when the student first starts at your school, either at the beginning of the year or mid-year.

Let’s discuss the timing in more detail on the next slide.

**Slide 18 - Progress Timing for Transfer Students**

The chart on this slide breaks down how the timing of the first term at your school impacts the progress review. All incoming transfers whose first term at your school is Fall must be reviewed for academic progress immediately, before being credited their Fall State Grant awards. For Summer trailer schools, there is no impact to the normal review cycle, since these schools check progress for all students annually at the end of Summer. For Summer header schools, that annually evaluate all students at the end of Spring, this will mean identifying the population of State Grant eligible Fall transfer students and reviewing progress for the preceding Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer, before crediting the Fall term award. When the awarded students from this population return the following year, Summer header schools may review them according to their normal cycle.

When a student transfers mid-year and begins at your school in either Winter or Spring, if the student did not have a State Grant award during the current year, then you must verify progress prior to granting the Winter or Spring award. However, if the student had an award at the previous school for a prior term of the current year, you have the option to either check immediately, or operate under the assumption that the previous school reviewed progress prior to crediting the Fall award. In this case, you may wait until your next academic progress cycle to verify progress, and simply document that the student was awarded at the previous institution.
Similarly, schools that normally check progress after Summer, have the option to review incoming Summer transfers with their normal cycle, if the student received an award during the Academic Year that immediately precedes the applicable Summer term.

Summer transfer students without Academic Year awards will need to be reviewed prior to crediting the Summer awards.

**Slide 19 - SGSP Resources**

In conclusion, we would like to refer you to some resources that will assist you in managing the State Grant Program. On our training page, you will find the most recent version of the State Grant Program Handbook, in addition to user guides, tutorials, FAQ documents, and various one-page resources. You will also find a page dedicated to providing institutions with Program Review Assistance.

In Alec, you will find links to the Document Library and PageCenter. PageCenter is our reporting repository, and contains student and institutional reporting for your school. Within the Document Library, you will find copies of correspondence that was sent to schools throughout the year, in addition to program guidelines and other resource documents from prior award years.

If you would like to contact us, PHEAA staff is available at 1-800-443-0646. For questions specific to Program Reviews and Audits, call State Grant and Special Programs Compliance Staff at 717-720-2740. You may also outreach to us via email, to share your questions and concerns, or to express your feedback. Your feedback in writing will help us to share your input with the appropriate staff.