

PA STATE GRANT PROGRAM

TRANSMISSION BEST PRACTICES



RELATED TERMINOLOGY

- **Actual Need (Conditional Awards)** – The PA State Grant Program releases eligibility notices to students with award amounts based upon current budget projections in the May/June time frame. The PA State Grant system is updated to reflect these conditional amounts instead of estimates. Students are informed that awards are “conditional” pending the passage of the Commonwealth budget, which generally occurs in early July.
- **Actual Need (Final Awards)** – The PA State Grant Program may recalculate eligibility depending upon the final Commonwealth budget. If the Need Analysis formula changes, records are rescreened to reflect revised eligibility amounts.
- **Certification Transmission** – This transmission is inbound from your school to the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) and allows your school to submit a variety of enrollment and eligibility data corrections in large volumes. This may occur throughout the processing cycle as frequently as desired. Data from your system must be converted into a standard flat file layout.
- **Disbursement Transmission** – An outbound standard flat file dataset from PHEAA to your school that is an electronic version of the disbursement roster. This data is used for the certification of eligibility. *NOTE: There is an additional type of Disbursement Transmission utilized by the Ready to Succeed Scholarship (RTSS) Program that serves as an equivalent to the “Needs Certified” listing in Partner Interface.*
- **Estimated Awards** – Estimates for the upcoming academic year are provided in the PA State Grant system, beginning in November. These cease when the transition to Actual Need is completed in April. Estimated eligibility is available via the State Grant Status Transmission. Many schools use this data for packaging first-year student awards.
- **PA State Grant Income Validation** – The automated process by which PHEAA compares the income reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) to the income reported on the State Income Tax Return or estimated income. It should not be confused with the federal verification process. Selected applicants must submit requested income data. Eligibility may change after the review is completed. Students who do not respond are cancelled immediately, prior to the first fall disbursement.
- **Status Transmission** – An outbound flat file dataset from PHEAA to your school that provides a listing of students at your institution. This transmission runs weekly on Friday evenings so as to provide updated information at the start of each week. The Status Transmission may be used to analyze data from the PHEAA system to identify potential corrections. The transmitted listing has more data than the Financial Aid Administrator (FAA) Status Listing report including summer term information and RTSS Program data.

UTILIZING TRANSMISSIONS

How transmissions are optimized is dependent on school choice. When using the Status and Disbursement transmissions, the data can be converted from our standard format into spreadsheets or other file formats that best suit your needs or system capabilities. You can use the sample files from the *Document Library* to get started in setting up the conversion. Below we've noted a few popular ways in which the data is used to expedite reporting.

- Status Transmissions may be used to:
 - » Monitor incompletes in order to encourage students to submit data that would complete the PA State Grant record.
 - » Review records that were cancelled for Income Validation (Cancel V) in August prior to the first fall term disbursement.
 - » Monitor weekly updates after the first disbursement for the term. Data on the Status Transmission may only be used for certification after the first term roster with funds has been generated.
- Disbursement Transmissions may be used to:
 - » Review the data that is produced with each disbursement roster.
 - » Perform award certification. Rosters and transmissions may be generated as follows:

TERM	BEGIN	END
Fall Pre-Disbursement Roster	Early August	Early October
Fall Disbursement Roster	Mid-August	Late-November
Winter Pre-Disbursement Roster	Mid-November	Early January
Winter Disbursement Roster	Late November	Mid-February
Spring Pre-Disbursement Roster	Mid-December	Early April
Spring Disbursement Roster	Mid-December	Mid-March
Academic Year Reconciliation Roster	April	June*
Summer Term Pre-Disbursement Roster	Mid-June	Late July
Summer Term Disbursement Roster	Mid-June	August
Summer Term Reconciliation Roster	October	December

*Academic year reconciliation rosters could be generated after this time frame depending upon a school's reconciliation status.

- Certification Transmissions are used to:
 - » Input datasets from your system into PHEAA's standard layout to enable mass updating and reporting that exceed the capabilities of *Partner Interface*. New or changed information that may be reported via the Certification Transmission includes enrollment status, enrollment mode, Satisfactory Academic Progress reporting, branch campus changes, and much more.

BEST PRACTICES

The below best practices are applicable to the Certification Transmission process.

- Test annually with PHEAA. Certification Transmission testing becomes available beginning in May for the upcoming year (e.g., May 2019 for the 2019-20 Award Year). PHEAA will not process any transmissions for your institution until testing is completed. *NOTE: Testing for the receipt of Disbursement and Status Transmissions occurs at the time of initial set-up and annually in the August/September time frame.*
- Contact PHEAA when you are ready to submit your first Certification Transmission for the academic year in question, through the Public_Service_Systems@pheaa.org mailbox.
- After testing is complete on the initial Certification Transmission file, PHEAA will automatically process subsequent files for your school. If a Certification Transmission file is sent in error, please contact PHEAA as soon as possible to stop the file from processing.
- Ensure you have the most accurate file layout and the correct header and footer that correspond to the year or summer period being submitted. Different file layouts are used for the academic year vs. the summer term. If the layouts are updated mid-year, PHEAA will notify participating institutions. Layouts are available in the *Document Library* under State Grant Program/Technical and Processing Information.
- Collaborate with other departments on your campus when possible (e.g., Registrar, Information Technology, Institutional Research, etc.).
- Always report data in the first 46 positions of the Certification Transmission. Positions after #46 are not required unless making an update. **Do not re-report information that has not changed.**
- Do not submit updates for students who do not have your school listed as his or her primary choice on the PA State Grant record. If the student did not appear on your last weekly Status Transmission, you should not submit an update.
- Do not submit cancellations for students who are ineligible or cancelled for another reason. Our system requires an award to be present in order for the cancellation to work.
- **Be aware that changes for students who are on hold by PHEAA will not be processed.** Please monitor these students and request updates through the *Special Request* function in *Partner Interface*. The weekly "PHEAA Validation/Other Rvw" *PageCenter* report identifies many of these students that are under review.
- If an update is not processed, your school will need to determine why (e.g., name discrepancy). The update will be bypassed each time until the error is corrected.
- Use *Partner Interface* to submit isolated or immediate student updates. Certification Transmission submissions are an overnight process whereas *Partner Interface* updates are real-time.
- Notify PHEAA if you plan to discontinue using any of the transmissions or have a change in operational or IT contact information.

If you need additional assistance with the transmissions processes, please contact State Grant and Special Programs staff at 1-800-443-0646, option 3, option 1 or email at Public_Service_Systems@pheaa.org.

These materials have been developed and paid for by the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) for informational purposes. Although the information contained in this document is believed to be accurate at the time of printing, PHEAA does not guarantee its accuracy. You should independently verify that this information is correct.

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