

READY TO SUCCEED SCHOLARSHIP (RTSS) FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS



NOMINATION

Student Candidates

Q. Where can I find my list of student candidates?

- A. If you wish to view your listing of student candidates on Partner Interface, log into the School In-House Portal (Alec), select the "View State Grants Dashboard" link, and select the "Ready to Succeed" tab on the Dashboard. If you are attempting to view your listing using the State Grant Status Transmission, student candidates will be indicated with an 'E' code in positions 508 (Fall term), 509 (Winter term), and 510 (Spring term).

Q. Will PHEAA be adding new student candidates throughout the year, or is the current list of screened students set for the year?

- A. The listing of student candidates may fluctuate throughout the year as students transfer schools or experience changes in their State Grant eligibility.

Q. Can I nominate a student for a RTSS award if that student does not appear in my listing of student candidates?

- A. No. Only students identified by PHEAA as student candidates and appearing in the "Student Candidates (PHEAA Screened)" listing in Partner Interface (or appearing with the appropriate code on the State Grant Status Transmission) may be considered for RTSS nomination.

Reporting Data

Q. Is it acceptable to round GPA when reporting data for student candidates? For example, if I have a student with a 3.249 cumulative GPA, may I report them as a 3.25?

- A. Cumulative GPA may not be rounded for RTSS nomination purposes. A student with a 3.249 cumulative GPA should be reported as a 3.24.

Q. How should I report student candidates who are not enrolled at my institution?

- A. If the non-enrolled student is a Reject E or Reject M for the State Grant Program, you should not report any RTSS information for that student. These students should remain in your listing of student candidates. If the student is a State Grant recipient, you should cancel his or her State Grant award.

Q. Can first-year students with college credits that they earned while in high school be nominated for a RTSS award if those credits make them at least an Academic Level 2? Can this include AP credits?

- A. A first-year student with 24 credits would be considered an Academic Level 2 - and could therefore be considered RTSS eligible - if those 24 credits were all college credits. This could happen if the student was enrolled in dual programs (high school and college) while completing his or her high school courses. Advanced Placement (AP) credits may also be used to help satisfy the 24-credit minimum eligibility requirement for the RTSS Program.

Q. If I nominate a student for the RTSS Program and this student drops below the 50% in-classroom minimum requirement, must I remove that student's nomination?

- A. As with the State Grant Program, you should report students who drop below the 50% in-classroom instruction minimum. You may continue to report this via Partner Interface or the Certification Transmission. Reporting a student as "Less than 50% classroom" will automatically remove his/her RTSS eligibility if the student is not granted an ADA accommodation within the mandated 30-day response period.

Q. Can I nominate for multiple terms at once?

- A. You may nominate students for multiple terms at once. Because GPA and Academic Level are point-in-time data that should be used throughout the award year, a student who is eligible for RTSS nomination in the Fall term can also be nominated using the same GPA and Academic Level for the Winter and Spring terms.

- Q. Can you clarify how GPA and Academic Level are determined? What if the student's GPA or Academic Level fluctuates during the year?**
- A. GPA and Academic Level are reported once for the entire year as a snapshot of achievement. This "snapshot" must be taken at the same time your institution reports academic progress for the State Grant Program. This is defined as the end of the Spring or Summer term of the award year immediately preceding the award year for which you wish to nominate the student, depending upon when your school checks academic progress for the State Grant Program. Though a student's cumulative GPA and Academic Level may fluctuate throughout the year, you should only report that student's GPA and Academic Level as they were at the time your institution checked academic progress. Once you report GPA and Academic Level for nomination purposes, you should not report GPA and Academic Level again for the same student until RTSS nominations open for the subsequent academic year.
- Q. Is there an advantage to completing nominations for eligible students as early as possible within the nomination window?**
- A. No. The first-come, first-served criterion of the RTSS Program only applies to the date that eligible students completed their FAFSA® and, if applicable, State Grant form. However, it should be noted that, due to limited funding, it is possible that RTSS funds may be exhausted during the first eligibility run. Schools are encouraged to submit nominations in time to be evaluated by PHEAA's first eligibility run. Nominations submitted after this run will still be accepted; however, there is no guarantee funds will still be available for students evaluated during any subsequent eligibility runs.
- Q. How should I report the required information for students with a GPA between 3.0-3.24?**
- A. Student candidates with a GPA of 3.0-3.24 and an Academic Level of 2-5 should have this data reported in the same place nomination reporting occurs. To report this information, navigate to the individual student record, select "Ready to Succeed" from the drop-down menu next to the Update Record button, and submit both GPA and Academic Level. Do not attempt to check the nomination boxes for these students.
- Q. When I attempt to nominate certain students, I get an error message stating I made an invalid entry due to an S10 or S34 review case. How can I nominate these students?**
- A. If you get an S10 or S34 error message when attempting to nominate a student, you should submit a Special Request to nominate. In your Special Request, you must state that the request is for the RTSS Program, and you must provide the GPA, Academic Level, and term(s) for which you are requesting the student be nominated. PHEAA recommends schools review students for whom Special Requests are submitted after the request is processed to ensure the students' records were updated in the manner intended by the school.
- Q. How should I report enrollment information (full-time, half-time, <50%, etc.) for a RTSS student candidate?**
- A. Enrollment information should be reported for the RTSS Program in the same way you currently report such information for the State Grant Program. To report this information via Partner Interface, navigate to the individual student record, click the Update Record button, and submit the necessary changes.

Academic Progress

- Q. How can I report a RTSS student candidate who did not make satisfactory academic progress and should not receive a RTSS award?**
- A. The reporting of unsatisfactory academic progress depends upon the student's current award eligibility.
1. If the student has a State Grant award for the current academic year, you should follow State Grant policy and reject the State Grant award for lack of progress. This will eliminate the student's RTSS eligibility.
 2. If the student is currently a State Grant Reject E or Reject M, please report the student candidate as "excluded" from the RTSS Program.
 3. If the student is nominated in error and awarded RTSS funds, you should cancel the RTSS award for academic progress immediately. You should also review the State Grant award (if applicable) and, if necessary, cancel it for academic progress separately.
- Q. How far back do schools need to check academic progress?**
- A. Schools must look back up to ten years to review for academic progress. Please refer to the *RTSS Program Guidelines* and the *State Grant Program Handbook* for further clarification.

- Q. Can students make up academic progress if their GPA and/or credit level improve the next term?**
- A. Because GPA and Academic Level are point-in-time data, academic progress cannot be made up during the award year. A RTSS student candidate rejected for academic progress is ineligible for the RTSS Program for the duration of the award year.
- Q. If a student had a State Grant in a prior academic year and is Reject E or Reject M for the current academic year, do schools need to check academic progress for that student before nominating?**
- A. Academic progress must be checked for any student who had a RTSS or State Grant award in a prior year within up to the last ten years. You should review progress based upon credits earned for the last academic year during which the student did receive a State Grant or a RTSS award.
- Q. If the student never received a RTSS award in a prior academic year, is the progress requirement to have 24 credits earned and 3.25 GPA?**
- A. If the student did not receive a State Grant or RTSS award within the last ten years, academic progress does not need to be reviewed prior to nomination for the current award year. Instead, the student should only be reviewed for nomination purposes, using all nomination eligibility criteria.
- Q. If a student goes back and forth and has a State Grant some years but not others and has a RTSS award for years in which he/she does not have a State Grant, how should progress be measured?**
- A. Schools should review academic progress for the last academic year during which the student received an award. This could be either the State Grant or the RTSS award, whichever is most recent. If the most recent award occurred in a year in which the student received both the RTSS award and a State Grant, the student would need to meet all academic progress requirements for both programs.
- Q. Do I have to review all RTSS student candidates for academic progress?**
- A. Student candidates who are a State Grant Reject E or Reject M only need to be reviewed if they are eligible for nomination. If such a student is eligible for nomination, academic progress should be reviewed per the policy explained in the *RTSS Program Guidelines*. Student candidates who also have a State Grant award must have already been reviewed for academic progress to satisfy State Grant requirements. If such a student did not make satisfactory academic progress, he/she may not be nominated for the RTSS Program.

Transfer Students

- Q. How would we know if a transfer student's previous school participated in the RTSS Program?**
- A. Before nominating or reporting on a transfer student, you should check to see if the student's prior school participates in the RTSS Program. A list of participating schools is available on [PHEAA.org/funding-opportunities/rtss/index.shtml](https://pheaa.org/funding-opportunities/rtss/index.shtml). If your institution is the student's primary school, you can also access the student's RTSS eligibility history.
- Q. How can I exclude a mid-year transfer student whose prior term school does not participate in the RTSS Program?**
- A. If you are using Partner Interface, you should use the mass update feature (even if you only need to exclude a single student) and select the applicable term you wish to exclude. If you are using a Certification Transmission, you should report a 'Q' in the applicable position(s): 252 (fall term), 253 (winter term), or 254 (spring term).
- Q. To check a transfer student's RTSS eligibility, would we be required to get a transcript from the student's prior institutions?**
- A. For a mid-year transfer in which the student's prior school participates in the RTSS Program, you should use the GPA and Academic Level already reported for the student in question (unless your institution accepted fewer than 24 credits for transfer). For all other cases, you should refer to the transfer student's transcript(s) as outlined in the *RTSS Program Guidelines*.

Partner Interface

- Q. To do a mass update on Partner Interface, I understand that I have to report like information for each student. Could you clarify what this means?**
- A. For GPA, you would need to report all 3.25 GPAs in a single mass update queue. Then, you could report all 3.26 GPAs in a new mass update queue. This should continue until all GPAs have been reported. The same requirement applies to Academic Level; you should report Academic Level 2, 3, 4, and 5 students separately.
- Q. I can see my listing of student candidates, as well as other listings, on the Dashboard. However, the numbers are not hyperlinked. How can I fix this?**
- A. If it appears that a listing is not hyperlinked, there is a good chance that you are either viewing the Dashboard as “All Schools” instead of as a specific campus or you have an incorrect period selected. The State Grants Dashboard in Partner Interface defaults to the “All Schools” setting and the most recent period, which updates every January 1. To access your listings, you must select the appropriate period and campus from the drop-down menus available in the upper right-hand corner of the Dashboard.

Transmissions

- Q. How will RTSS information be sent with the State Grant Applicant Status Transmission? Is it a separate file?**
- A. The State Grant Status Transmission has been modified to incorporate RTSS data. The new file size is 700 bytes. RTSS information may be found beginning at position 508. For further details, you may refer to the updated transmission layouts in the *Document Library* under State Grant Program/Technical and Processing Information.
- Q. Which transmission should I use to nominate students for a RTSS award?**
- A. You should use the revised Certification Transmission to nominate, exclude, and report upon RTSS student candidates. The updated file layout is available in the *Document Library* under State Grant Program/Technical and Processing Information. This includes new RTSS fields and has a size of 400 bytes.

Awarding, Certification, and Disbursement

- Q. Is there a method for selecting students if the \$5,000,000 program allocation does not cover all eligible, nominated students in the first run?**
- A. Students will be selected based upon the first-come, first-served criterion of the RTSS Program. This means that, during the eligibility run, students will be sorted by the date they completed their FAFSA® and, if applicable, State Grant Form. A secondary completion date/time stamp sort may be used if multiple eligible, nominated students completed their forms on the same day.
- Q. Are the funds allocated in any way among school types?**
- A. No. Funds will be awarded to eligible, nominated students based upon the first-come, first-served criterion of the RTSS Program.
- Q. How will we know when the students we nominate are awarded? Will there be a listing on PageCenter?**
- A. No listing will be sent to PageCenter for the RTSS Program. Eligible students will display awards on Partner Interface and the Status Transmission. Schools must then certify these awards before any funds can be disbursed.

Student Notification

- Q. How frequently will PHEAA contact students with potential eligibility notices?**
- A. PHEAA will notify awarded students of a RTSS eligibility determination after they are evaluated for an award during an eligibility run. This notification will instruct students to log into Account Access, where they will find their RTSS award determination and explanation. After a student is awarded RTSS funds, PHEAA will notify that student if any fluctuation to his/her award or eligibility occurs.

Miscellaneous

- Q. Are the State Grant counter and RTSS counter separate? Does receipt of RTSS funds use up the State Grant counter in any way?**
- A.** The State Grant counter and the RTSS counter are separate. However, once students have exhausted their State Grant counter, they are not eligible to receive RTSS funds. For further information regarding the RTSS counter, please refer to the *RTSS Program Guidelines*.
- Q. Is credit reporting required for the RTSS Program?**
- A.** No. To participate in the RTSS Program, schools are only required to report nomination information, academic progress, and enrollment updates. Further clarification on RTSS reporting requirements may be found in the *RTSS Program Guidelines*.
- Q. Is a student required to be full time in order to qualify for a RTSS award?**
- A.** Eligible students may be full-time or part-time, but may not be enrolled less-than-half-time.