

PHEA TRAINING

Pennsylvania State Grant

**2014-15 CERTIFICATION
PROCEDURE WORKSHOP Q&A**

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to provide the financial aid community with responses to questions that were addressed during the 2014-15 and 2015 Summer Term State Grant Program Certification Procedure workshops. Information is being shared for clarification purposes only. This document supplements the *2014-15 and 2015 Summer Term State Grant Certification Procedures*.

The organization of questions presented in this document follow the order of the *Procedures*. Sections are noted for cross-referencing purposes. Please note that there were no questions for Chapter 4 identified.

CHAPTER 1 – SCHOOL AND PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

TERM LENGTH *(Section D)*

What is the difference between terms and modules?

A term (semester) is a period of 15-18 weeks in length, normally comprising one-half of the academic year. A module is a period that does not span the length of the entire term. By following the rules set forth in the *Certification Procedures*, it may be permissible to combine two or more modules to meet PHEAA's minimum term length requirements.

CHAPTER 2 – STUDENT ENROLLMENT AND ELIGIBILITY VERIFICATION

ENROLLMENT *(Section A)*

Does PHEAA process three-quarter time awards similar to the Federal Pell Grants?

No, PHEAA awards at amounts for half-time and full-time enrollment only. Chapter 2 of the *2014-15 Certification Procedures* outlines the enrollment minimum definitions.

ENROLLMENT *(Section A, paragraph 2, Instruction Delivery and Enrollment)*

Can a student who is enrolled in 6 classroom and 9 online semester credits receive a half-time State Grant award?

No. Eligibility must be evaluated on the student's total term enrollment. This student is enrolled full-time with 15 semester credits, therefore, the less than 50 percent classroom rule applies and the student must be reported as such.

With regard to the <50% Classroom Workflow, how are schools notified when the student is eligible for an award?

PHEAA mails approval letters to those students who are granted an Americans with Disabilities Act accommodation. The Financial Aid Office also receives a copy of the student approval letter. Additionally, as noted in *Appendix C of the 2014-15 Procedures*, the weekly '<50% Attending Status Report' will list students as 'Approved'.

How do students appear on the Reconciliation Roster when they are still in the pending 30 day window?

Students will appear with awards on any State Grant roster until the 30-day window expires. At that time, most records are cancelled automatically by the PHEAA system. That cancellation will appear on the weekly GPAD report.

ENROLLMENT (Section A, paragraph 3, Enrollment Reporting)

If the student received an associate degree, can the cancellation reason of 'Student Graduated' be used?

No. This field should only be used to indicate the student has received a bachelor's degree and is no longer eligible for State Grant aid.

ENROLLMENT (Section A, paragraph 5, Remedial/Developmental Course Exceptions)

What is the definition of remedial coursework?

PHEAA does not provide its own definition of remedial or developmental coursework since schools must establish these guidelines. Schools that are eligible for Title IV, Higher Education Act (HEA) program assistance have specific limitations on remedial coursework as set forth by the U.S. Department of Education. In general, a remedial or developmental course is one that is designed to increase the student's ability to pursue a course of study leading to a degree, a "prerequisite to the college-level course". Remedial courses may be: credit but where the credits do not apply toward the degree; or, reduced credit where some credit is given toward the degree.

ENROLLMENT (Section A, paragraph 11, Schools With Interim or Intersession Terms)

With regard to intersessions, if a student enrolls in six credits how many credits should be counted during the Spring term?

Your school may count a maximum of 3 credits toward one term. For a student who enrolls in six credits during the Winterim session, your school may count 3 credits toward Fall enrollment and 3 credits toward Spring enrollment, if the student needs those credits to meet the minimum enrollment requirements for Fall or Spring.

BONA FIDE FIVE-YEAR PROGRAMS (Section C, paragraph 8)

Is the final award used during the first year or during the last year only?

Schools have bona fide five-year programs, when the program is: 1) structured and approved to be five-years in length by the Provost/Academic Dean and listed in the institutional catalog as such; and 2) reported to PHEAA via the annual State Grant Educational Cost Form. Students who enroll in these programs do not become ineligible for the State Grant until the 4.0 award counter is reached. At that point, in the final year, the school is responsible for verifying the enrollment in the bona-fide program and can report the last (fifth) year by using the Program of Study field in the State Grant record. Please check with your Registrar or Provost if you have questions regarding programs that are bona fide five year programs.

PROGRAM OF STUDY *(Section C, paragraph 3, Academic Credential Status)*

If an associate degree is the primary credential and the student earns a certificate along the way, is the student still eligible for a State Grant award?

This will depend upon the program length and the program in which the student is currently enrolled. As defined in Section C.1, the student's program of study is "...either the initial program of study under which the student was admitted to the institution or under which s/he is currently enrolled." Therefore, if the student is enrolled in an associate degree program at a degree-granting institution, the student would meet the academic credential criteria. If the student is enrolled at a degree-granting institution in a certificate program, that program would have to meet the State Grant minimum requirements (e.g. at least two academic years in length) in order to be eligible for a State Grant.

PROGRAM OF STUDY *(Section C, paragraph 5.b)*

If a student enrolls in a non-approved program and then transfers into an approved program, when does eligibility begin?

As noted, when a student changes from a non-approved to an approved program during the term, the student is not eligible for State Grant aid until the next academic term. The student's change in program of study must be reported to PHEAA and the student's record must be reprocessed before they can receive the State Grant award. Changes should be reported via Partner Interface.

EXAMPLE:

Student A enrolls in a certificate program that is one year in length at ABC Community College, a semester school, and transfers to an associate degree program before the Fall term is over. The student is not eligible until enrollment begins in the associate degree program during the next full academic term which is Spring.

MAXIMUM NUMBER OF STATE GRANT PAYMENTS *(Section A)*

Does PHEAA inform the student that the Summer grant counts toward the maximum number of State Grants? Our school offers discounted Summer tuition and the associated State Grants result in lower award amounts.

PHEAA does provide information on our website informing students that the Summer State Grant is included in the maximum number of payments for which a student may be eligible.

Your school would be the best provider of guidance to students regarding whether or not refusal of the Summer State Grant would benefit the student financially in the future. Make sure the student fully understands that there is a limit to the number of State Grant payments he/she may receive and that a full-time award payment will 'use up' the same payment counter even if the amount is small. If the student decides to refuse the Summer payment, be sure to follow the procedures as outlined in Section L of Chapter 2, Students Who Refuse State Grant Awards.

I understand that a student can view the award counters used on the Eligibility Notice in the paperless inbox on Account Access. How can the school view the Eligibility Notice?

Your school may access the student's Account Access information in order to be able to better communicate State Grant status via the secure school portal, Alec.

In the school portal, select 'View Students AES Accounts'.

[View Students AES Accounts](#)
Account Access

You will be prompted to enter the student's SSN and Date of birth.

SSN / DOB Entry

Enter the student information below to access their account:

*SSN:

*Date of Birth: (mm/dd/yyyy)

Messages

Notices and Updates

- There are no notices or updates for Friday, June 27, 2014.

The student's account displays. Please note that if the student did not create an account, the email address in the 'Account Profile' section on the right of the display will be blank.

Change Account Date of Birth: 01/01/1996 SSN: XXX-XX-XXXX

Account #: Contact Us | About Us | Privacy | Sign Out

Welcome Sally Student Paperless Inbox Account Profile

Account Summary

Applications & Status

Account Summary

[Need Help?](#)
We're here to assist you.

Alerts & Messages

- 2014-15 State Grant eligibility is available at this time.** For those students who have been determined eligible to receive an award, PHEAA is unable to finalize this information until the PA Commonwealth budget is passed. If the passing of the budget results in a change to your record, PIICAA will notify you via email and update Account Access.
- Were you impacted by the California Wildfires and need to postpone payments?**
Please [contact us](#) and indicate when you think you can make your payments again.

PA State Programs

- [View my PA State Grant Status](#)
 - [Complete the PA State Grant Form](#)
 - [Apply for the PA Summer State Grant](#)

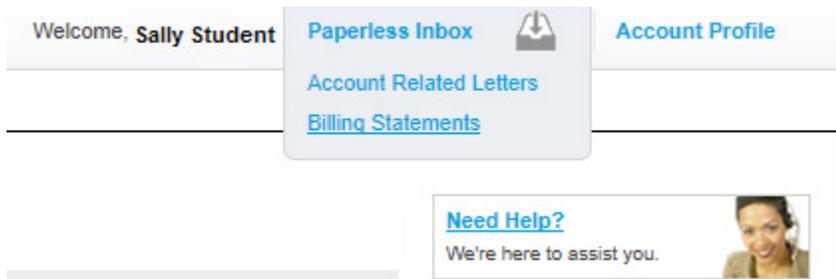
Account Profile

Address:
123 Main St.
Anytown, PA 11111

Phone:
717-123-4567 primary

Email:
student@anyprovider.net

Select 'Paperless Inbox' in the upper right of the screen.



The student's notice is accessible in PDF format by clicking the Account Related Letter in the Subject column. In this example, the 2014-15 Eligibility Notice dated May 20, 2014.

Paperless Inbox

Account Related Letters

Date	Subject	Delivery Method
05/20/2014	2014-15 Eligibility Notice	Electronic

[View Billing Statements](#)

[Adobe Reader](#) is required for PDF documents.

ACADEMIC PROGRESS (Section D)

If a student takes Summer 2013 classes but does not receive a State Grant and progress is reviewed after the Spring term 2014, can I count the Summer credits?

No, the State Grant Academic Progress review must begin with the first term where State Grant aid is received (Fall 2013). As noted in the definition section of Section D, "Credits earned in terms retroactive to the receipt of State Grant award(s) being reviewed do not count towards academic progress." This is not a new practice.

Term	Summer 2013	Fall 2013	Spring 2014
Credits Attempted	6	12	12
State Grant Awarded	Not applicable – No application	Full-time	Full-time
Credits Earned	3	9	12
SUMMARY:	Although the Summer term is in the cycle of 'Summer, Fall, Spring', if the student did not receive State Grant eligibility until the Fall term, then Summer credits are not permitted to be used in the evaluation of progress.		
ACTION:	Reject the student for progress effective with the next term, Summer 2014 or Fall 2014. The student will remain ineligible for subsequent terms until the 3 regular credits are earned.		

Can a student use remedial credits to make up a deficit for Academic Progress?

A student can only use remedial credits to make up a progress deficit if: 1) The student was granted a remedial exception for enrollment during the term in which there was a deficit in credits earned; and 2) The credits failed were the remedial course credits. Remember the rule where no more than ½ of the enrolled credits may be remedial applies when students are making up a deficit.

Examples:

Student	Fall Attempted	Fall Completed	Spring Attempted	Spring Completed	Summer Attempted	Summer Completed	Progress
Student A	Half-time 3 regular and 3 remedial	3 regular passed; 3 remedial failed	6 regular	6 regular	3 remedial – no State Grant	3 remedial – no State Grant	Yes, can use 3 remedial to make up deficit
Student B	Half-time 3 regular and 3 remedial	3 remedial passed; 3 regular failed	6 regular	6 regular	3 remedial – no State Grant	3 remedial – no State Grant	No! Cannot use 3 remedial to make up deficit
Student C	Half-time 3 regular and 3 remedial	3 regular passed; 3 remedial failed	6 regular	6 regular	3 regular – no State Grant	3 regular – no State Grant	Yes, can use 3 regular to make up deficit

When a student visits my school for the Summer term, how do I know when the 'home' school is checking Academic Progress?

If your school is listed in the State Grant record meaning that you are processing the aid for the Summer term, you will have to be in contact with the 'home' school to confirm when that school verifies progress. As indicated in Chapter 2, Section A, paragraph 10, you must obtain all documentation necessary to verify compliance with eligibility requirements for the State Grant Program. If the 'home' school provides information indicating that they verify progress after the Spring term, then you must verify progress prior to crediting the State Grant for the Summer term. If the 'home' school indicates that progress is verified after the Summer term, then the 'home' school will likely ask you to provide your transcripts to them at the completion of the Summer term.

We have many students who use a State Grant award during the Summer and thus run out of eligibility later when their award may be higher. Also, a large number of Summer "guest" students come to our institution and require extensive administrative support. Must we accept and process Summer State Grants?

No. Schools choose to participate in the Summer State Grant Program. The annual Cost on the Web collection form has an indicator that schools check to participate in the Summer State Grant Program. If a school indicates "no" however, no exceptions can be made and all students in all programs at your school would not be eligible to receive Summer awards.

If my school chooses to assume that a mid-year transfer student made progress because of a Fall award that is present at the prior school on the State Grant record, what documentation is needed?

Your school should keep a copy of the status of the State Grant record as of the date Academic Progress was reviewed. This may be a screen shot or report noting the Fall school, award amount, and award date.

When evaluating the credits/clock hours earned for transfer students, should my institution use credits or clock hours?

In most cases, your school is evaluating the student based upon credits earned on the transcript. If the student transferred from a quarter institution, you will need to know if quarter or semester credits were awarded and used to credit the State Grant. If the student transferred from a Business, Trade or Technical school, you will need to know if credits or clock hours were used to credit the State Grant. If the information is not clear on the transcript, contact the Financial Aid office at that institution. A conversion chart is provided in the *Certification Procedures* and is included below for your convenience.

Minimum Number of Credits/Clock Hours That Must Be Successfully Completed		
For each:	Award Counter	Student must complete a minimum of:
Full-time semester award	.50	12 semester credits/450 clock hours
Full-time quarter award	.33/.34	12 quarter or 8 semester credits/300 clock hours
Half-time semester award	.25	6 semester credits/225 clock hours
Half-time quarter award	.16/.17	6 quarter credits or 4 semester credits/150 clock hours

In the following example presented in the workshop, could the student have been made part-time and eligible?

No. Eligibility must be evaluated on the student’s actual term enrollment. Shelley was enrolled full-time and eligibility must be applied according to that enrollment status.

WORKSHOP PRESENTATION EXAMPLE:

- Shelley did not attend Summer 2013
- She attempted 12 semester credits in the **Fall 2013**, received a full-time State Grant award and earned 12
- She attempted 12 semester credits (9 new credits and 3 from repeated course from Fall) during Spring 2014, received a full-time State Grant award and earned **9 new credits**.

Shelley did not make progress.

- Was awarded based on 24 credits (minimum enrollment – 12 + 12)
- Earned 21 credits (repeat course credits only earned once)

If progress is verified after the Spring term and a student fails to make progress, can the credits earned during the Summer term be used to make up the missed credits?

Yes. 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.

PENNSYLVANIA DOMICILE (Section E)

If a student gets a new address which is non-Pennsylvania after the Fall term is credited, can the student keep the grant?

In this case, your school’s responsibility is twofold: 1) Verify that PHEAA does not already have this information by checking the Student Record and the Activity tab; and 2) If PHEAA does not have this information, supply it using the Special Request function in Partner Interface.

PHEAA will then take action to prevent further disbursements and place the student in a Pennsylvania Domicile review to verify the address change date. Depending upon the information received, the student may be permitted to retain the Fall grant and become ineligible for subsequent terms. If it is verified that the student moved from Pennsylvania prior to the start of classes and the school was not aware of this information, it will likely result in a PHEAA Collectable (i.e. PHEAA will pursue repayment of the State Grant directly from the student).

CHANGES IN EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC) AND FEDERAL PELL ELIGIBILITY *(Section F)*

Our school often has cases of 'no need' for other financial aid but the student is eligible for the State Grant with a different EFC. What information in the student's record will explain the reason for this discrepancy?

To start, we recommend reviewing the EFC PHEAA is using to determine eligibility for a State Grant award. If that differs from the EFC your school records show then a comparison of the data PHEAA has to that being used by the school may be needed. The different data may be a result of special consideration that PHEAA granted for the family's reduction of income, out-of-pocket medical expenses, etc. A review of the student's activity page may provide you with insight into if special processing has occurred.

HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION *(Section G)*

Why does the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) only accept evaluation agencies recognized by the National Association of Credential Evaluation Services (NACES)?

The Pennsylvania Department of Education website is: www.education.state.pa.us. Please contact PDE with questions regarding evaluations and evaluation service entities.

CHAPTER 3 – ATTEMPTED CREDITS REPORTING

Our school bills students for dropped courses, should we report these credits?

As noted in Chapter 4, the State Grant Program uses the term 'drop' to describe a course or courses for which the student was registered but where the course(s) was removed from the student's schedule and thus no transcript or charges remain on the student's account. Even if your school's practice does not meet this definition because charges remain on the account, the courses do not appear on the transcript and, therefore, are not included as attempted credits.

When is the best time to report credits?

This depends upon the institution's preference and capacity for reporting enrollment as of the census or freeze date. However, PHEAA's only requirement is that the credits must be reported by the deadlines. These are July 31, 2015 for the 2014-15 Academic Year and December 31, 2015 for the Summer 2015 term.

Where can we confirm that reporting has been done?

Your school has several options:

1. The weekly Attempted Credits Report is available in the PageCenter report repository. A guide on how to interpret this report is available on PHEAA.org/training under the State Grant Program section.
2. Partner Interface allows your school to filter all records by year or term. By selecting 'Reported', a list will generate of all student records where both online and classroom components were reported. By selecting 'Unreported', a list will generate of all student records where one or both components have not been reported. These lists can be exported into an Excel spreadsheet or Comma Separated Value (CSV) file. For more information on filtering, refer to the *Partner Interface Filtering Tips* document located on PHEAA.org/training under the Partner Interface section.
3. Schools that use State Grant Status Transmissions receive this data in a flat file format. This allows the data to be transferred to another system. The Status Transmission layout and test file are available in the *Document Library* section of the school portal under *Technical and Processing Information/SG Electronic Data Transmission Layouts*.

CHAPTER 5 – DISBURSEMENT AND CASH MANAGEMENT

MAINTAINING AND ACCOUNTING FOR FUNDS *(Section A)*

Should our business office have a separate account for academic year and summer funds?

PHEAA does not require that separate bank accounts be maintained by academic period and/or year. However, you school must maintain proper accounting in order to adhere to PHEAA's netting rules which prohibit the netting of excess funds from one period or year to another. For more information, reference Chapter 5, Section E, paragraph 1.a of the *2014-15 State Grant Certification Procedures*.

FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY AND PROGRAM INTEGRITY *(Section B)*

Is there a place I can check to see why my school could be placed on hold?

A mainframe transaction is currently in development which will list the reasons your school has been placed on disbursement hold. PHEAA expects to announce details on the release of these changes later in the calendar year.

What is the processing time on PHEAA's end when rosters and refunds are submitted?

Refunds, if properly identified, are posted to the school account within the week. Paper rosters may take up to 2 weeks to process. Schools are encouraged to use Partner Interface and/or Certification Transmissions in conjunction with the online certification form to submit changes and certify a roster for more immediate updates to your institutional record.

DEFINING DISBURSEMENT ROSTERS, DISBURSEMENT ROSTER AVAILABILITY, AND FUNDS AVAILABILITY *(Section B)*

Must I certify the first Reconciliation Roster before getting an additional Reconciliation Roster?

Yes. Although you may request another Reconciliation Roster at any time, an additional Reconciliation Roster will not be generated until the previous roster is returned and marked as such in the PHEAA system (FG3S transaction).

How often are supplemental Reconciliation Rosters run?

The initial Reconciliation Roster is sent automatically providing the school is up-to-date with all prior rosters. If a supplemental Reconciliation Roster is requested by your school, it will be generated within the week if it is for the current or preceding academic year. It should be a rare request that the year is older than the current or previous academic year. However, when this happens, additional wait time may be required.

If we notice a change is made to a student but the balance is zero funds owed to my school and zero funds owed to PHEAA, must I request another Reconciliation Roster?

Yes. As indicated under paragraph d 'Multiple Reconciliation Rosters' of the *2014-15 State Grant Certification Procedures*, your school is not considered balanced with PHEAA if there is an award/student mismatch between your last or 'final' Reconciliation Roster and the PHEAA system. Although, it may be the case that the cancellation of one student's award balanced out the amount owed to another student mathematically resulting in zero owed and zero due. However, the records on the roster, in this case, do not match the State Grant system to account for what students actually received the State Grant funds.

What is the deadline for requesting academic year funds?

As noted in the 'Best Practices' found in Chapter 5 of the *2014-15 State Grant Certification Procedures*, your school should request funds due to your school for the 2014-15 Academic Year prior to June 1, 2015 and absolutely no later than August 1, 2016.

What is the difference between the Status Listing and the Reconciliation Roster?

The Status Listing is a weekly report that provides the status, complete or incomplete, of all students attending your school. This report is a tool that captures point in time of State Grant status and its use is optional. More information on the Status Listing is available in *Appendix C* of the *2014-15 Certification Procedures*. A Reconciliation Roster is generated after all term disbursements have been made. PHEAA requires your school to review and certify the eligibility of each student on the Reconciliation Roster. That roster may generate funds if it is determined that a balance is owed to your school.

When are the refreshed Status Listings and GPAD reports available?

Most of the weekly school reports run refresh overnight on Fridays or over the weekend. New data is available on Monday mornings in your school's PageCenter mailbox. For additional information on reports, please reference *Appendix C* of the *2014-15 State Grant Certification Procedures*.

Does the State Grant Dashboard in Partner Interface summarize all eligibility updates?

Please be aware that the Dashboard counts on Partner Interface represent records where updates were made. It is important to note that just because a record was updated does not mean that the student's eligibility has changed. That is why the Dashboard does not entirely replace the weekly GPAD reports.

Is the Reconciliation Roster available in the flat file format?

Yes. Schools have the option of receiving all term and Reconciliation Rosters through the Disbursement Transmission process which generates the data in a flat file format. Technical layouts and test files are available in the *Document Library* under *State Grant Program/Technical and Processing Information*.

STUDENT RECONSIDERATION DEADLINES (Section D)

Can the student appeal the April 1st reconsideration deadline?

If a student is in a review with PHEAA and the information received is incomplete, PHEAA will request additional information. Each student must respond by April 1st or within 30 days if the letter is dated March or later. Students have the ability to appeal their ineligibility status by providing the reason that the status may be incorrect and also providing enough supporting documentation. Each case is reviewed on a student-by-student basis and the outcomes may vary.

CREDITING *(Section G)*

Why does the procedure say that funds are deposited in approximately 10 business days when the presentation states 12 business days?

At the time of publication, our Financial Management department was advised of changes needed to accommodate changes at the Pennsylvania Department of Treasury. Since that time, it has been requested that an additional time be built into that transfer of funds process. Therefore, it may be around 14 business days from the time your roster is generated to the time the funds are deposited in your school's bank account.

What is the difference between an income validation and income/asset review?

Income validation is when an exchange of data occurs between PHEAA and the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue. That exchange prompts PHEAA to review the student's income. An income/asset review is conducted after staff identified conflicting information either in the current academic year or in a prior year and initiates a review of the record.

MISCELLANEOUS

The Certification Transmission layout codes do not match Partner Interface. Was this intentional?

Certification Transmission where developed long before the inception of Partner Interface. The codes are based on the transfer of binary data (e.g. 1 means 'Yes', 2 means 'No', etc.) and have never directly correlated to the codes and meanings that are found in the State Grant record fields. Your school must follow the Certification Transmission layout to understand what codes must be updated in order to successfully submit corrections to your State Grant records.

What is the fiscal period by which the State Grant Program operates?

The State Grant Program operates with the Commonwealth's fiscal year of July 1 through June 30. The budget is established for the subsequent Fall, Winter, Spring, and Summer.

When will schools be able to view college information and disbursements using Partner Interface?

Please know that we are committed to making improvements and enhancements to our systems and resources. At this time however, we cannot provide a definitive date on when these enhancements will be made.

Can the student's PHEAA account number be submitted in lieu of the Social Security Number?

Yes. Any school correspondence regarding a student, either the PHEAA (not school) account number or SSN must be recorded and/or submitted.

Created in 1963 by the Pennsylvania General Assembly, the Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance Agency (PHEAA) has evolved into one of the nation's leading student aid organizations. Today, PHEAA is a national provider of student financial aid services, serving millions of students and thousands of schools through its loan guaranty, loan servicing, financial aid processing, outreach, and other student aid programs.

PHEAA's earnings are used to support its public service mission and to pay its operating costs, including administration of the Pennsylvania State Grant and other state-funded student aid programs. PHEAA continues to devote its energy, resources and imagination to developing innovative ways to ease the financial burden of higher education for students, families, schools, and taxpayers.

PHEAA conducts its student loan servicing activities nationally as American Education Services (AES) and FedLoan Servicing.

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GR-CPFAQ
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