



# Pennsylvania State Grant **PROGRAM HANDBOOK**

2016-17 Academic Year  
and 2017 Summer Term

# 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 *2016-17 and 2017 Summer Term State Grant Program Handbook* workshops. Information is being shared for clarification purposes only. This document supplements the *2016-17 and Summer 2017 State Grant Program Handbook*.

The organization of questions presented in this document follow the order of the Procedures. Sections are noted for cross-referencing purposes.

## CHAPTER 1 – SCHOOL & PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

### SECTION A, SCHOOL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

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**Q. Does the notification of name changes to PHEAA also apply to location changes?**

- A.** Yes. It is important for us to know if the location of your school has changed so that we can properly update our records. Additionally, applicants that need to complete the *State Grant Form (SGF)* or change enrollment using our online enrollment change form are presented with your school name along with the city.

**Q. Must we notify PHEAA if our holding/controlling group changes?**

- A.** Yes. If the institution's holding or control group officially changes (i.e., a change of ownership), you must notify PHEAA within 30 days of the change. We are requesting this information because our Master Agreements and other records may need to be updated as well to ensure that the institution will remain eligible for the State Grant Program.

### SECTION B, APPROVED PROGRAM OF STUDY

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**Q. What should a school do to add a new program of study?**

- A. Four-Year Degree-Granting Institutions** - If you are a four-year degree-granting institution, your school does not need to report any new program of study.

**Two-Year Degree-Granting Institutions** - If your institution is a two-year institution and begins to offer four-year degrees, you must contact us by calling **800.443.0646**, option 3 or emailing [sghelp@pheaa.org](mailto:sghelp@pheaa.org). Otherwise, you do not need to take any action.

**Business, Trade, and Technical Institutions** - If your institution is a Business, Trade, and Technical school, you must request approval for a new program of study for the State Grant Program by contacting Institution Eligibility at **717.720.2740**. Please note that programs cannot be eligible for both the State Grant and PA Targeted Industry Programs.

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## SECTION C, TERM START DATES

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**Q. Could you explain the new language in the *Handbook* that states “schools must follow the official academic calendar on which transcripts are generated?”**

**A.** This language was added to the *Handbook* to remind schools that the calendar used for producing transcripts is the same calendar used for disbursing State Grant aid. This calendar must be the same calendar for which Academic Progress is evaluated, unless the school has “Special Crediting Instructions” from PHEAA.

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**Q. Do we need to submit a form to let PHEAA know if our term starts within the three-day tolerance?**

**A.** If your terms begin within the start date tolerances listed within the *State Grant Handbook*, you do not need to submit any special forms to PHEAA. You will be reporting your actual term start dates via the annual State Grant educational cost collection in the spring.

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## SECTION D, TERM LENGTH

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**Q. Are finals included in the term length or does the term end on the last day of instruction?**

**A.** The final exam period should be included in the term length.

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**Q. Does the calculation for terms exceeding PHEAA maximums apply to study abroad programs?**

**A.** Given the various orientation sessions that often accompany a study abroad program and foreign academic calendars that often do not coincide with American standards, the home school should just use the same academic period that it normally uses (non-study abroad) in determining enrollment status for their study abroad students. If the student will receive at least 12 credits for their study abroad experience, then we would consider them full-time for State Grant purposes.

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# CHAPTER 2 – STUDENT CERTIFICATION OF ELIGIBILITY

## SECTION A, PARAGRAPH 1 (ENROLLMENT)

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**Q. If a student transfers to my school, can the student update my school in his/her State Grant record?**

**A.** Yes. A student can update his/her enrollment (institution, enrollment status) for any term of the current academic year by selecting the “Update School Information” link located within the “View my PA State Grant Status” section of *Account Access*. It should be noted that if funds were already disbursed to the original institution, the change will be routed to PHEAA staff for review. In that case, the student receives a message online which states, “Your school information changes have been submitted and will be reviewed by PHEAA staff. Your request will not be processed until the school on your eligibility notice confirms the status of funds which were sent to them on your behalf.” Otherwise, the update is made immediately. Additionally, your school may request an enrollment change by using the “Primary School Change” function in *Partner Interface*.

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## SECTION A, PARAGRAPH 2 (INSTRUCTION DELIVERY AND ENROLLMENT)

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**Q. Can the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Accommodation Form get faxed back to PHEAA or must it contain an original “wet” signature?**

**A.** Yes. The ADA Accommodation Form may be faxed back to PHEAA. Please work with the student to ensure that the form is signed however before returning the document back to PHEAA.

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## SECTION A, PARAGRAPH 9 (REPEAT WORK)

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- Q. Can you please provide a better explanation of enrollment status for someone who repeats courses within the same academic “term?”**
- A.** Yes (this is applicable for modular programs). School A combines two, eight-week modules to form a 16-week semester. Student A enrolls in the first eight-week module for six semester credits and fails both courses. Subsequently, Student A enrolls in the second eight-week module for the exact same courses. The student must be processed for a full-time State Grant after enrollment is verified in the second module since the total number of credits taken over the 16-week period was 12. Keep in mind that the student will likely have satisfactory Academic Progress issues unless the six-credit deficit is made up since repeat courses may not be counted toward Academic Progress.

## SECTION A, PARAGRAPH 3 (ENROLLMENT REPORTING)

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- Q. How do we review eligibility if a student has some earned “F” grades and also “unofficially withdraws” from other courses?**
- A.** If at least one “F” grade was earned, then this is not a State Grant withdrawal.
- Q. Can you explain the difference between earned and unearned “F” grades?**
- A.** Earned “F” grades are those where the student completed the course but failed due to substandard academic performance, whereas the unearned “F” grades may indicate that the student stopped attending and was just assigned a failing grade by a faculty member. Your school will need to investigate to see if the “F” grade is actually earned or was received due to an unofficial withdrawal.
- Q. For students who receive all “F” grades, if the school investigates this with the student’s professors and only two of five professors respond with an actual date (not earned “F”), can the school use the last date of activity given by those two professors?**
- A.** If both professors responded that the “F” grades were unearned, you may use the latest date of activity or attendance in those courses to determine the “unofficial withdrawal” date. You must have at least one instructor who can confirm attendance for the whole term. A lack of response cannot be an assumption of attendance for the whole term.
- Q. At the end of the term, you identify a student that has all “F” grades and after researching you determine that the student does have a last date of attendance recorded. Is this considered an “unofficial withdrawal?”**
- A.** Determining if this is an “unofficial withdrawal” depends upon the last date of attendance. If the last date of attendance was the last day of the term, the student completed the term and it is not an “unofficial withdrawal.” If the last day of attendance is not the last day of the term, then the student is considered an “unofficial withdrawal” for State Grant purposes.
- Q. Our school has an “F” grade that means failed but we also have a “Z” grade that means “unofficial withdrawal.” If the student receives the “Z” grade, must we continue to investigate the last date of attendance?**
- A.** Remember that a student must be eligible for payment on the date of the term disbursement roster (not a pre-disbursement roster). If the date of earning the “Z” grade falls after the term roster, you will have to consider the State Grant withdrawal procedure. In order to receive a “Z” grade, your institution has already established that the student falls into the “unofficial withdrawal” category.

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**Q. Which enrollment reporting requirement should occur first – less than half-time or less than 50-percent classroom?**

- A. Reporting a student as less than half-time occurs first since this will mark the student's record as ineligible for a Pennsylvania State Grant. Keep in mind that less than 50-percent classroom reporting is only required for students who are award-eligible.

## SECTION A, PARAGRAPH 5 (REMEDIAL/DEVELOPMENTAL COURSE EXCEPTIONS)

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**Q. What is meant by counters being “lifetime” for remedial exceptions?**

- A. When a State Grant is awarded and the school has reported that the student required a remedial exception in order to meet the minimum enrollment requirements, that term's associated award counter is considered a “remedial” counter. A student can use no more than a grand total of 1.0 remedial counters which is typically the equivalent of full-time attendance for one academic year. This means the student may have used remedial exceptions in the past at another institution, may have reached his/her limit and may not be eligible for an additional remedial exception at your institution.

**Q. Should we use FG0B to review remedial counters?**

- A. We encourage you to use the “Eligibility Summary” portion of the student's record within *Partner Interface*. A previous issue with alignment, which forced usage of the FG0B transaction, has been resolved, and an “Issue Resolution” memo alerting school users was emailed in June 2016.

## SECTION A, PARAGRAPH 10 (ENROLLMENT AT ANOTHER INSTITUTION)

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**Q. Which school is responsible for processing summer State Grant aid for a visiting student?**

- A. When the student is seeking a degree at another institution but enrolls at your school, you may accept the award if you can obtain documentation from the “home” school verifying compliance with all State Grant eligibility requirements and the credits taken at your school will be accepted toward the degree or credential at the “home” school.

## SECTION B, UNDERGRADUATE STATUS

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**Q. Can you please define conditionally admitted?**

- A. The definition of official acceptance or admission versus conditional/provisional admittance is an institutional matter. Students admitted as conditional are regular students only if the school officially accepts them into the eligible degree or certificate program. As with the federal guidelines, if the student is merely allowed to take some courses before being officially admitted to the program, s/he is not considered a regular student and is not eligible for State Grant aid until s/he is officially admitted. If a student continues beyond the trial period and enrolls as a regular student, the student may be paid for a State Grant for the entire payment period as long as all other eligibility requirements are satisfied.

Some indicators that the student has been provisionally admitted to your institution may include:

- Lack of eligibility for Pell (due to conditional admittance)
- Not being admitted into a degree program
- Failure to provide all credentials for regular admittance (high school diploma, transfer credits, etc.)
- Limit on the number of courses/credits/number of terms of enrollment
- 100% remedial coursework

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**Q. Our transfer students are provisionally admitted, so does this mean they do not qualify for a State Grant?**

**A.** Correct. If your institution does not admit someone as a “regular” student, then the student is ineligible for the Pennsylvania State Grant.

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**Q. We have encountered students who have an undergraduate degree already but enroll at our school for an associate degree. Are these students eligible for the State Grant Program?**

**A.** No. Once the student has earned the baccalaureate degree or its equivalent, s/he is no longer eligible for the State Grant Program even if the student did not use up the equivalent of four-academic years’ worth of State Grant eligibility permitted by law.

## **SECTION C, APPROVED PROGRAM OF STUDY**

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**Q. If the student changes his/her Program of Study and was not on the disbursement roster but showed up later on a GPAD report, can this report be used to determine eligibility?**

**A.** No. GPAD is not relevant to this decision as it is an acceptable notification after receipt of the roster and not the roster. The student being listed on the actual roster is key in the decision of if the student must be marked as ineligible, eligible or possible withdrawal.

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**Q. When the student’s Program of Study changes “before the disbursement roster,” does this mean before we certify the disbursement roster or before PHEAA generates the disbursement roster?**

**A.** Previously, eligibility was determined using the timing of the student’s change in program and the start date for the term. The change in this policy to now use the date PHEAA generates the disbursement roster better aligns with the withdrawal procedures, which state that the funds must be disbursed and credited to a student’s account prior to the student’s change to a non-approved program in order to use the school’s refund policy to determine the award adjustment.

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**Q. Is there an overall medical exception to the 4.0 maximum award counter that students can receive?**

**A.** No. By law, most students are limited to the equivalent of four full-time academic year awards. One exception is certain students enrolled in a five-year bona-fide program who may be eligible for a fifth year of State Grant aid. Other than this, there are no exceptions to the maximum 4.0 award counter and, as noted in the *Handbook*, some students may reach the maximum number of payments before earning a credential of any kind.

## **SECTION D, ACADEMIC PROGRESS**

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**Q. Can schools round up Academic Progress credits (ex: 23.5 credits to 24 credits) to meet the required number of credits? I understand we cannot do this for enrollment purposes but would like to confirm this for Academic Progress as well.**

**A.** No. Consistent with enrollment guidelines on rounding, credits earned for Academic Progress should not be rounded up. For example, if a student with two full-time counters, attempts 24 total credits during the year but only earns 23.5 credits, they should be rejected for Academic Progress starting with the next available term until the .5 credits are earned.

**Q. Can we counsel students to consider taking credits above the part-time or full-time minimums to make up a credit deficit?**

**A.** Yes. If a student is not on track to earn sufficient credits to make Academic Progress, the student may elect to take additional credits above the full-time or part-time enrollment minimums. Therefore, you can discuss whether the part-time student would like to enroll above the part-time minimum, but not full-time (e.g., 9 credits) to make up the credits not earned in the previous term(s).

However, students may not elect to be awarded for part-time when they are enrolled full-time. A student may refuse State Grant aid for the term, but it is prohibited for a school to reduce eligibility from full-time to part-time for a student in order to meet the Academic Progress standard or 50% classroom ratio requirement. The summer term is also 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.

**Q. Can military credits be counted towards Academic Progress?**

**A.** No. Military credits and advanced standing credits cannot be counted towards the Academic Progress review.

**Q. How long does it take PHEAA to process an Academic Progress exception form?**

**A.** If the student's information is complete, it generally takes ten business days. However, during periods of heavy volume, particularly in the summer months, it may take up to six weeks for PHEAA to determine eligibility. Student information is processed in order of date received.

**Q. How are the student and school notified of the results of the Academic Progress exception review?**

**A.** A student is informed by PHEAA of his/her approval for an exception by letter sent through U.S. postal mail. This letter is logged on the student activity page as shown in Figure 1. The student's award will also show as reinstated on subsequent *Status Listings/Transmissions* and rosters. On *Partner Interface*, the "Academic Level" displays on the student's "Award Information" tab and will contain one of the following staff approval codes: "A" for year 1, "B" for year 2, "C" for year 3, "D" for year 4, and "E" for year 5.

Figure 1

Activity Type	Period	Description	Activity Date	Close Date	Contact Description	User
E-mail	2015-2016	STATE GRANT ELIGIBILITY NOTICE	02/16/2016	02/16/2016	To Student	System Update
Miscellaneous	2015-2016	GRANT REJECT REINSTATED BY SCHOOL PROGRESS-PARTNER INTERFACE	02/11/2016	02/11/2016	To Grants	PHEAA Staff - Name Removed
Miscellaneous	2015-2016	GRANT REJECTED BY SCHOOL-NO PROGRESS-PARTNER INTERFACE	02/11/2016	02/11/2016	To Grants	PHEAA Staff - Name Removed
E-mail	2015-2016	STATE GRANT ELIGIBILITY NOTICE	01/26/2016	01/26/2016	To Student	System Update
E-mail	2015-2016	STATE GRANT ELIGIBILITY NOTICE	06/30/2015	06/30/2015	To Student	System Update
Manual Letter	2015-2016	APPROVED ACADEMIC PROGRESS - MEDICAL WITHDRAWAL	06/26/2015	06/26/2015	To Student	PHEAA Staff - Name Removed
Form	2015-2016	ACADEMIC PROGRESS INFORMATION	06/25/2015	06/26/2015	From Student	PHEAA Staff - Name Removed
E-mail	2015-2016	STATE GRANT ELIGIBILITY NOTICE	05/20/2015	05/20/2015	To Student	System Update
Miscellaneous	2015-2016	GRANT REJECTED BY SCHOOL-NO PROGRESS-PARTNER INTERFACE	05/12/2015	05/12/2015	To Grants	System Update
E-mail	2015-2016	STATE GRANT ELIGIBILITY NOTICE	05/08/2015	05/08/2015	To Student	System Update

Figure 2

	Fall	Winter	Spring	Academic Level
School Name (OE Code):	99999999-01 PHEAA Sample School	99999999-01 PHEAA Sample School	99999999-01 PHEAA Sample School	
Program of Study:	Bachelor's Degree (All Other Majors)	Bachelor's Degree (All Other Majors)	Bachelor's Degree (All Other Majors)	
Award Date:	01/21/2016	02/11/2016	02/11/2016	
Housing Status:	Off Campus	Off Campus	Off Campus	
Enrollment Status for AA:	Full-Time	Full-Time	Full-Time	
Award Report:	\$1,888	\$1,888	\$1,888	33
Alternate Award (AA):	3992	3992	3992	31
Enrollment Status for AA:	Part-Time	Part-Time	Part-Time	
Remedial Exception:				0.0
Award Counters:	0.0	0.0	0.0	1
Award Type:	Processed	Processed	Processed	
Cancellation Reason:				
School Adjustment Reason:				
PHEAA Adjustment Reason:				
Classroom Credits:				
Online Credits:				
Academic Level:	C - 3rd Acad Yr STP APVD			1-3rd - FAQ Approved
Total College Cost:	\$24,000	\$24,000	\$24,000	
PHEAA Estimated Fall:	5775	5775	5775	
PHEAA EFC:	0	0	0	

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**Q. Since Summer 2007 is prior to the 10-year look back and the 2007-08 Academic Year is not, if our school evaluates Academic Progress after the spring term, should we include Summer 2007 in the cycle for this review?**

**A.** No. The review period begins with the Fall of 2007-08 and the history period noted by "HST" on State Grant reporting ends with Summer 2007.

provides the most recent 6 terms, semesters or quarters, of State Grant aid prior to the 2017 Fall term on the roster. Refer to the Prior Term(s) Indicator following the student's name.

The term is represented by a letter code -  
"F" - Fall; "W" - Winter; "S" - Spring;  
"R" - Summer

A two-position number indicates the calendar year.

Examples:

S16	2015-16 Spring term
W11	2011-12 Winter term
R12	2012 Summer term
HST	Indicates that the student's most recent State Grant was for a term prior to the 2007-08 Academic Year

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**Q. If a student earned credits in a prior academic year where no State Grant aid was received and then repeats a course, may the current repeated credits be counted toward satisfactory Academic Progress?**

**A.** No. Since the credits were previously earned, that is the cycle in which they would have been counted if they were successfully completed. They should not be counted in the progress review for this year.

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**Q. Our school has a student that was rejected for progress and submitted an exception. The exception was reviewed and approved. How do we go about reviewing progress from this point forward?**

**A.** When PHEAA grants exceptions to students for Academic Progress, students get a "pass" as if no deficit credits exist for that previous term. However, Academic Progress must be met for the excepted term for the student to maintain grant eligibility. Starting with the next term, the student must continue to earn the appropriate number of credits commensurate with their award counter. For example, if a student was short three credits for the Spring term of the 2015-16 Academic Year and was granted an exception by PHEAA for the Fall 2016 term, the student is not obligated to make up that deficit but must earn the minimum number of credits commensurate with the Fall 2016 term enrollment in order to continue to be eligible.

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**Q. How can my school verify if a course listed on a transcript is classified as remedial?**

**A.** In general, course numbers less than 100 are often considered remedial. In order to determine the type of course that is listed on a transcript, your school may reach out to the prior school and ask for assistance. If possible, you may also review the institutional catalog that will normally be available on a school's website.

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**Q. Why is that when students transfer between branch campuses, the “Last Award Different School” (LADS) messaging shows?**

**A.** For PHEAA State Grant purposes, branches have different OE Codes and/or a different PHEAA-assigned OE suffixes. For this reason, our system treats it as a different school and the LADS message displays on rosters. While we attempt to provide schools with some indication of incoming transfer students, with this system limitation, schools may want to consult another office (registrar, technical, etc.) to verify incoming transfers. Information regarding LADS messaging on the roster is found in *Appendix F, page F-7* of the *Handbook*. LADS messaging on the *Status Listing* is explained in the *State Grant FAA Status Listing* guide found in the “Technical and Processing Information” section of the *Document Library*.

## SECTION F - DOMICILE

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**Q. Do students who attend the Milton Hershey School and are originally from out-of-state automatically meet the Pennsylvania domicile requirement?**

**A.** No. There are no exceptions to the Pennsylvania domicile requirement. A student may have previously lived out-of-state prior to attending and living at a Pennsylvania boarding school and may still be considered a resident of his/her home state. Any questionable information should be submitted to PHEAA for review.

## SECTION G, HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATION

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**Q. If a student meets the Federal Department of Education high school graduation requirements, can we assume the student meets the State Grant Program requirement?**

**A.** No. You may not assume that satisfaction of the U.S. Department of Education rules to define a high school graduate for financial aid purposes are the same as those for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

For more information on the State Grant Program high school requirement, such as instructions for students with foreign high school diplomas, please visit and/or instruct students to visit the “Frequently Asked Questions” section of our website at: [PHEAA.org/faqs](http://PHEAA.org/faqs)

**Q. We have a student who has been enrolled for a number of terms but we do not have proof of high school graduation. Can anything be done to assist this student?**

**A.** Yes. Students who complete 30 U.S. college credits have the option of submitting a “Request for Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma (CSSD) Transcript Based on 30 College Credit Option” form to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE). Once the secondary diploma is awarded by PDE, this information should be submitted to PHEAA for reconsideration of the high school graduation requirement.

**Q. With regard to the high school graduation requirement, what is the status of correspondence high schools and online high schools?**

**A.** According to State Grant statute, an approved high school means any public high school located in the Commonwealth, and any public or private secondary school, whether designated as a high school, academy, preparatory school, or otherwise, located in the Commonwealth or elsewhere, which in the judgment of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, provides a course of instruction, at the secondary level, and maintains standards of instruction substantially equivalent to those of the public high schools located in the Commonwealth.

A diploma issued by correspondence study or distance education is not generally accepted as fulfillment of the high school graduation requirement because the PA Department of Education is unable to make a determination as to whether such schools offer an education that is substantially equivalent to those of the public schools located in the Commonwealth, as required by law. Exceptions to this rule exist with the Pennsylvania Cyber Charter Schools. PDE is able to confirm that the standards for these schools are substantially equivalent to those of public high schools located in Pennsylvania.

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**Q. Why does PHEAA permit distance learning for postsecondary education but not for a high school diploma/ equivalency?**

**A.** The State Grant Program statute and regulatory requirements for secondary and postsecondary education are not the same with regard to distance learning. Under Act 541, the State Grant Program’s authorizing legislation, and its governing regulations 22 Pa. Code §121.21(b), PDE is given the sole authority to determine if a school is approved and considered to have met the high school graduation requirement for State Grant eligibility.

## SECTION H, CHANGES IN EXPECTED FAMILY CONTRIBUTION (EFC) AND FEDERAL PELL ELIGIBILITY

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**Q. If our school does a Professional Judgement on a student’s account and thinks the student may be eligible for an award now, can we request that the student get reviewed for State Grant eligibility?**

**A.** If the Professional Judgement was a result of extenuating circumstances such as recent death of a parent or spouse, recent unemployment of a parent or spouse, etc., you should advise the student to complete the “Reduced Income Form” which is available on [PHEAA.org/forms](http://PHEAA.org/forms).

## SECTION I, SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER CORRECTIONS

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**Q. If the student filed the FAFSA® twice, once before the filing deadline and once after, what documents would PHEAA accept as proof for “on-time” consideration?**

**A.** As noted in *Section I of Chapter 2 of the Handbook*, the student may submit a copy of his/her original *Student Aid Report (SAR)*. We could also accept a letter with identifying information explaining the reason for the duplicate filings. At that point, we would be able to look up the original FAFSA® filing and date. Identifying information includes the student’s name, Social Security Number (SSN) or PHEAA Account Id and signature.

## SECTION K, SATISFACTORY CHARACTER

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**Q. Since PHEAA needs information about satisfactory character, is there any plan to collect this information on the State Grant Form (SGF)?**

**A.** There is no plan to collect this information directly from the student. It is important to keep in mind that the *SGF* is a supplemental form to the FAFSA® that is generally required only once during the student’s academic career. The satisfactory character review is a statutory State Grant Program requirement and part of your school’s participation agreement.

# CHAPTER 3 – ATTEMPTED CREDITS REPORTING

## SECTION A, REQUIREMENT

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**Q. Will the attempted credit reporting requirement continue once the State Grant Distance Education Pilot Program (SGDEPP) is integrated into the State Grant Program?**

**A.** Any changes to reporting requirements as a result of the future integration of the SGDEPP program are yet to be determined.

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# CHAPTER 4 – PENNSYLVANIA STATE GRANT COSTS & AWARD ADJUSTMENTS

## SECTION A, EDUCATIONAL COSTS USED IN CALCULATING A STATE GRANT

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- Q. My school is not a four-year institution but sometimes students question how much State Grant funding they would be eligible for at a four-year institution, how can I advise the student?**
- A.** You may refer the student to the “How Much Can I Expect to Receive?” section of [PHEAA.org](http://PHEAA.org) for general awarding guidelines. You may also use the Early Estimator to get a ballpark figure. However, the specific institution in which they plan to eventually transfer would be able to provide a more accurate estimate.

# CHAPTER 5 – DISBURSEMENTS & CASH MANAGEMENT

## SECTION A, MAINTAINING AND ACCOUNTING FOR FUNDS

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- Q. What payments are sent from PHEAA to the student?**
- A.** PHEAA does not pay any student directly. Instead, PHEAA sends funds due the student to the school.
- Q. My school had an Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) bounce back. What would cause this?**
- A.** If an EFT transfer to PHEAA is unsuccessful, please double check that your school submitted the payment using the account number and bank on file with PHEAA’s Financial Management department. If you have questions, you may contact staff at [fmeftadmin@aessuccess.org](mailto:fmeftadmin@aessuccess.org). Financial Management will assist in trouble shooting the issue and, depending upon the cause, may advise your school to consider sending a paper check to ensure that your refund is posted in a timely manner and your disbursements are not impacted. The refund address for paper checks is located on the bottom of the disbursement roster.
- Q. What happens when a school refund is sent to the wrong PHEAA address?**
- A.** When funds have been sent to the wrong physical address, if the payment is labeled correctly, it will eventually be rerouted to State Grant and Special Programs. If the funds are labeled incorrectly, not only will the processing of the refund be delayed, but the funds could be applied to the wrong program. It is best to verify the correct PHEAA address and label all refunds correctly for efficient processing.
- Q. Our school only allows us to use the students’ full names and last four positions of the SSNs when sending refunds. Is that sufficient identification for PHEAA purposes?**
- A.** As long as that information is submitted along with identification that the refund is for “Pennsylvania State Grant” and notes the academic year and/or period, the last four positions of the students’ SSNs and the students’ full names would be sufficient. You may also use the PHEAA-assigned Account Id instead of the Social Security Number.

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## SECTION E, DEFINING DISBURSEMENT ROSTERS, DISBURSEMENT ROSTER AVAILABILITY AND FUNDS AVAILABILITY

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**Q. Is PHEAA able to automatically generate additional reconciliation rosters if the school is not in balance?**

- A. No. After several opportunities to review this matter, PHEAA decided that it was not the best option. Automatically generating a reconciliation roster proves to be problematic when the funds are not needed because the student was not enrolled or not eligible. By sending the additional rosters at the school's request, this limits over-disbursements and refunds.

## SECTION F, CREDITING

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**Q. If a student is under review for the 2016-17 Academic Year, are we safe to credit funds for the Summer 2016 term?**

- A. If the student has a completed 2015-16 State Grant record, the EFC from that record is normally used to calculate 2016 Summer term eligibility. If the PHEAA EFC for the Summer 2016 term is the same as the PHEAA EFC for the 2015-16 Academic Year, you would be safe to credit the Summer term award. However, if 2016-17 is the only record on file and it is under review, you would have to wait for the review to be completed.

**Q. What are "Special Crediting Instructions?"**

- A. "Special Crediting Instructions" are school-specific instructions provided by PHEAA. Typically, these instructions are required when a program structure falls out of the normal parameters outlined in the *State Grant Handbook*. These instructions, in conjunction with the *State Grant Handbook*, are used by PHEAA when conducting Program Reviews and evaluating compliance with the State Grant Program requirements. Once emailed to your institution, these instructions are filed in PHEAA's archive and are referenced on your institution's activity page (FC5S). You may reference this when calling PHEAA staff with questions. "Special Crediting Instructions" are only valid during the award year for which they are issued, and must be provided by PHEAA on an annual basis for continued use.

# MISCELLANEOUS

## LATE APPLICATIONS

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**Q. Can you please explain the State Grant policy regarding students who have filed late due to making a late decision to return to school?**

The PA State Grant requires the student to file the *FAFSA*® by May 1<sup>st</sup> or August 1<sup>st</sup> (limited to non-renewal applicants at a community college, designated open-admission institution, a Business, Trade, or Technical school (BTT), Hospital School of Nursing, or two-year program of study that is not transferable to another institution) for the upcoming academic year. If a student files the *FAFSA*® after the deadline, the student is considered late (Reject L).

The student may submit a signed and dated letter of appeal to PHEAA if s/he filed the *FAFSA*® within 30 days of being admitted to the school/program. For a successful appeal, the student must include a copy of the official acceptance letter. This scenario applies to the entire academic year before the April 1<sup>st</sup> reconsideration deadline. It does not matter if the student filed the *FAFSA*® first or was accepted into a program first as long as these two events occurred within 30 days of each other.

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**Q. Are there plans to expand upon *Partner Interface*?**

A. Yes! We are constantly in discussions about expanding features of *Partner Interface*. Some of the updates we are considering include: document upload; incorporation of student data currently displayed on the FG59 transaction only; the student-level disbursement information currently available via FG7E; college demographics and contacts (FG3Y and FG3I); college program and cost information (FG3M and FG4B); and college-level disbursement information (FG3S). As you can imagine, this development effort is expected to be large and will take some time to complete. We will communicate further on future enhancements as they progress.

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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## PENNSYLVANIA HIGHER EDUCATION ASSISTANCE AGENCY

1200 North Seventh Street, Harrisburg, PA 17102-1444 . Phone: 800.692.7392

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