
Introduction



This volume of the Federal Student Aid Handbook comprises topics pertaining to colleges' general obligations in administering the Title IV student aid programs: institutional and program eligibility, administrative requirements, audits, recordkeeping, program reviews, and providing information to the public are all explained.

Throughout the Handbook we use “college,” “school,” and “institution” interchangeably unless some more specific use is given. Similarly, “student,” “applicant,” and “aid recipient” are synonyms. “Parents” in this volume refers to the parents of dependent students, and “you” refers to the primary audience of the Handbook: financial aid administrators at colleges. “We” indicates the United States Department of Education (Department, ED), and “federal student aid” and “Title IV aid” are synonymous terms for the financial aid offered by the Department.

We appreciate any comments that you have regarding the Federal Student Aid Handbook. We revise and clarify the text in response to questions and feedback from the financial aid community, so please contact us at fsaschoolspubs@ed.gov to let us know how to improve the Handbook so that it is always clear and informative.

CHANGES FOR 2014–2015

We edited the guidance on pages 5–7 related to state authorization for greater clarity and to include new paragraphs on the school complaint process and Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) GEN-13-20. We noted in the margin of page 5 that for states that have been unable to meet certain state authorization regulations, their implementation date has been delayed until July 1, 2015.

On page 8 we added the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) and the Test Assessing Secondary Completion (TASC) as tests for which a state can recognize a passing score as the equivalent of a high school diploma.

In a few places “telecommunications” was replaced with distance education, which is the more current term. See the last paragraph of page 15, the middle margin note on page 26, and the first bullet in the right-hand column on page 151.

In the body of page 18 we added a section titled “State requirements and program length.”

We moved the text of the margin note on study-abroad students being eligible for federal student aid to the body of page 25.

We added an example of the clock-credit hour conversion exception to the margin of page 29. Also on that page we placed the section “Out-of-class student work,” which previously was a margin note on the following page.

We added a paragraph to the bottom of page 46 explaining that several of the Department’s systems are behind the Access and Identity Management System, which has a single ID and password. If the ID is not used within 90 or 365 days, it will be suspended or deactivated respectively. Also on that page we added a margin note about two-factor authentication.

On page 47 we added a margin note about the new phone number you can use to contact any of several FSA contact centers for schools.

We amended and added to the guidance on page 48 to account for the changes to enrollment reporting file layouts, the timing of their submission, and the information to be reported, which are discussed in DCL GEN-14-07.

We updated the statutory references to the Perkins Act on page 78 and otherwise amended the guidance pertaining to the correspondence course and student limitations for greater clarity.

On pages 78–81 we updated the guidance to reflect that beginning with 2014, the two-year cohort default rates will no longer be used. From now on, only the three-year rates will be calculated and published.

We updated the margin note on page 105 about the Financial Aid Shopping Sheet to show that DCL GEN-13-26 provides the latest information.

On page 108 we replaced the margin note about a future ED-provided disclosure form with a note about the new Gainful Employment Disclosure Template that the Department has now developed and that schools must use to create webpages that offer the required information about their GE programs.

We moved the section “Providing additional information” from the margin of page 113 to the body of page 122.

In 2013 the Private Education Loan Applicant Self-Certification was updated, and we noted on page 123 that it appears in Dear Colleague Letter GEN-13-15.

We added to the margin of page 138 a reference to the *Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education*, which has helpful FERPA information.

We combined the material from last year’s Chapter 8 with Chapter 6 because much of the information in both was closely related.