



Prison Education Program Fact Sheet- Program Approval Process

As of July 1, 2023, a confined or incarcerated individual is eligible to receive a Federal Pell Grant if they enroll in an eligible Prison Education Program (PEP). This fact sheet provides more information for postsecondary schools about the approval process for a postsecondary program to become an eligible PEP.

What is an eligible PEP?

PEPs are eligible programs defined by statute under [34 CFR 668.8](#), offered by a public or nonprofit educational institution (as defined in [34 CFR 600.4](#)), or a postsecondary vocational institution (as defined in [34 CFR 600.6](#)). Private for-profit (proprietary) institutions cannot offer a *Title IV* eligible PEP. In addition to the definitions linked above, an eligible PEP must meet the requirements in [34 CFR 668.236](#).

How does a school apply for a PEP?

Federal *Title IV* eligible schools **must** use the Electronic Application for Approval to Participate in the Federal Student Financial Aid Programs ([E-App](#)) to report or request approval of a PEP. Additionally, the Department of Education (Department) has developed a [PEP Application Form](#) that schools must submit with the E-App, which is available on the "[Prison Education Program](#)" [topics page](#) on the Department's [Knowledge Center](#).

Do all PEPs at a school need Department approval?

The Department will review a school's application for the first two iterations and locations of a PEP. Following the Department's initial approval of your school's PEP at the first two locations, additional PEPs at either the same location, or at other locations your school operates, may be determined to be eligible without further approvals from the Department - except as required by the regulations under [34 CFR 600.7](#) (conditions of institutional eligibility), [34 CFR 600.20\(c\)\(1\)](#) (expanding eligibility), or [34 CFR 600.21\(a\)](#) (updating application information), as applicable, if such programs are consistent with your school's accreditation and/or state approval agency requirements. However, for programs where the Department's approval is not required, you must complete Sections 1, 2, and 4 of the PEP Application Form and include the form as supporting documentation on the E-App when reporting those additional programs to the Department. Before applying for a PEP, ensure that your program is consistent with your school's accreditation and any applicable state approval agency requirements and that you have been granted authorization to offer your program at the correctional facility. The Department will not accept a PEP application that does not meet those conditions.

What if my school offers a *Title IV* eligible program to individuals who are confined or incarcerated at correctional facilities other than state or federal facilities?

Schools offering programs in a correctional facility that is not a federal or state facility must apply for and receive approval of the program as an eligible PEP. In an effort not to interrupt the postsecondary program of incarcerated students receiving Pell Grants for programs prior to the implementation of PEP requirements, otherwise eligible confined or incarcerated students who were enrolled in an eligible *Title IV* program prior to July 1, 2023, may continue to receive a Federal Pell Grant until the earlier of: (1) July 1, 2029; (2) the student no longer meets Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements and reaches the maximum timeframe for program completion under [34 CFR 668.34](#); or (3) the student has reached their Pell LEU, exhausting their Pell Grant eligibility under [34 CFR 690.6\(e\)](#).

What if my school has additional questions about prison education programs?

For additional questions about PEPs, visit the [Prison Education Programs Topics page](#) on the Knowledge Center, read the [Electronic Announcement GENERAL-23-52](#), or email the Department at: PEP@ed.gov.