

June 2015

RE: Direct Loan Tools for Windows, Release 15.0

Dear DL Tools Users:

Federal Student Aid is pleased to announce the availability of William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (DL) Tools for Windows, Release 15.0. DL Tools is a multi-year Windows-based application designed to provide the following functionality related to all Direct Loan schools' software:

- Compare the School Account Statement (SAS) to loans and actual disbursements recorded in EDEExpress or an external file, and/or compare the SAS to the DL Tools Cash database.
- Print the SAS in a readable format.
- Track Cash Receipts (drawdowns) and Refunds of Cash.
- Rebuild your Direct Loan origination and disbursement records in EDEExpress using an automated process.
- Run the Disbursement Measurement Tool Report to help monitor Direct Loan records in your EDEExpress database.

DL Tools was developed to process data for multiple program years. DL Tools Release 15.0 contains functionality for the 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 cycles.

All Direct Loan schools can use the SAS Compare and Cash Management functions. The Rebuild function can be used by schools to rebuild Direct Loan records in EDEExpress for Windows databases. Non-EDEExpress users can export data from a rebuilt EDEExpress database to recreate non-EDEExpress loans or databases. For information on creating file formats and exporting data from EDEExpress to an external system, see Volume III of the *2015-2016 Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) Technical Reference*.

The Disbursement Measurement Tool Report (available in DL Tools if connected to EDEExpress) and certain Direct Loan lists with tolerances (available in EDEExpress) assist schools with monitoring current operations, procedures, and program status and can also help meet the Quality Assurance requirement in the Direct Loan program. Tolerances can be applied when running these reports. Tolerances are guidelines you set for evaluating the effectiveness of your school's Direct Loan processes and procedures.

Your school decides which DL Tools reports to use, when to run them, and what action to take as a result. You can use the reports to review progress as part of a continuous improvement plan.

If you do not use EDEExpress, you can still use DL Tools to assist in reconciling Direct Loans. You can import cash, loan, or disbursement data from your external Direct Loan system into DL Tools and compare your data to the SAS. Fixed-length record layouts for each of these file types are included in Volume IV, Section 3 of the *2015-2016 COD Technical Reference*.

Important DL Tools Comparison Reports Note: DL Tools Loan and Disbursement Comparison Reports are designed to be run using the SAS with year-to-date (YTD) detail, *not* monthly detail. See [Direct Loan Bulletin \(DLB\) 02-36](#) for information about default settings and SAS option selections. You can change your SAS options (YTD detail, for example) by accessing the COD Web site at cod.ed.gov.

About this Cover Letter

This letter includes the following information:

- An overview of DL Tools for Windows, Release 15.0
- A notice regarding Product Registration feature in Release 15.0
- A list of enhancements available in DL Tools Release 15.0
- Release 15.0 software and user documentation download instructions
- Microsoft Windows Compatibility and Section 508 Compliance notices
- Contact information for technical support and additional assistance

DL Tools for Windows, Release 15.0

DL Tools Release 15.0 can be installed as an upgrade to DL Tools Release 14.0, which enables you to carry forward 2013-2014 and 2014-2015 DL Tools data from your Release 14.0 database. You cannot upgrade to Release 15.0 from a DL Tools version earlier than Release 14.0.

To upgrade your DL Tools database from Release 14.0 to Release 15.0, run the Stand Alone Custom installation option (for standalone PCs) or the Workstation installation option (for PC workstations accessing a database stored on a network drive).

If you are installing the DL Tools software for the first time, you must choose the Stand Alone Full installation option (for standalone PCs) or the Network Server and Workstation installation options (for PC workstations accessing a database stored on a network drive).

Important Note on Backups: You cannot access 2012-2013 data in your DL Tools database after you upgrade from Release 14.0 to Release 15.0. We recommend you create a backup copy of your Release 14.0 database (**DLT.mdb**) before upgrading to Release 15.0 in the event that you must access your 2012-2013 data using an earlier version of DL Tools on another PC.

For more information on installing DL Tools Release 15.0, see the *DL Tools for Windows Release 15.0 Installation Guide*, available for download from the FSAdownload Web site.

Product Registration

DL Tools, Release 15.0 implements a limited-time product registration feature intended to gather information about how your school or organization uses DL Tools to assist with future planning and enhancements.

The product registration feature will initiate after you install Release 15.0 and log into the software. You will continue to be prompted to complete the product registration process each time you access Release 15.0 prior to October 16, 2015 until you submit a response. DL Tools automatically removes the product registration prompt if your PC's system date is on or after October 16, 2015.

Note: The third page of the product registration process includes an option to temporarily bypass entry and submission of your responses. This option is only applicable to your current session of DL Tools.

The product registration process contains several different questions about the specific DL Tools functionality you use currently; it also gathers some background information about your organization to better understand your needs as a user.

An interactive summary report is displayed at the end of the product registration process, prior to the final submission step. You can click sections of the report to return to specific questions and revise your answers. At the successful conclusion of the product registration process, your responses are automatically transmitted to Federal Student Aid using your PC's default e-mail client.

Note: If you are a multi-campus school using multiple DL Tools databases, we recommend that your main campus submit the product registration response on behalf of all your campuses to avoid duplicate or conflicting feedback. Likewise, if you use a networked DL Tools database that is shared by multiple PC workstations at a single location, we recommend that your school's DL Tools lead submit the response.

Release 15.0 Enhancements

The following enhancements are available in DL Tools Release 15.0:

General Changes

- **Program Year 2012-2013 Removed** – We removed DL Tools functionality and message classes applicable to program year 2012-2013.
- **Program Year 2015-2016 Added** – We added DL Tools functionality and message classes applicable to program year 2015-2016.

Rebuild

- **Updated Rebuild Functionality for CIP Code, Enrollment Status, and Enroll OPE ID Fields** – In June 2015, the COD System implemented changes to the structure and content of Rebuild (message class CODRBFOP) files to help DL Tools users recreate anticipated and actual disbursement records in their EDEExpress databases that include critical school-reported data elements such as CIP Code and Enrollment Status (for 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 records) and Enroll OPE ID (for 2013-2014, 2014-2015, and 2015-2016 records). This COD System change moved all anticipated disbursement data that was sent previously in the origination record section of the Rebuild file to the disbursement record section of the file.

As a result of these changes to the Rebuild file, we removed the CIP Code, Enrollment Status, and Enroll OPE ID fields from the Import dialog box for the Rebuild import type in Release 15.0. In prior versions of DL Tools, users were required to select default values for these fields for loan records recreated in EDEExpress. The import process now uses the data elements added to the Rebuild file by the COD System to update Direct Loan records in EDEExpress.

- **Rebuild of New 2015-2016 PLUS and Grad PLUS Fields** – The Update Selected Records and Update All Records rebuild options for 2015-2016 update two new credit-related fields for Direct PLUS and Grad PLUS loan records on the Credit/PLUS App Info sub-tab of the EDEExpress 2015-2016 Origination (Direct Loan) tab if provided in the Rebuild file. The two new fields are Credit Requirements Met and Endorser Approved.

The Credit Requirements Met and Endorser Approved fields do not exist in EDEExpress versions prior to 2015-2016. If you use DL Tools to rebuild your EDEExpress 2014-2015 or 2013-2014 database, note that you should review all rebuilt PLUS and Grad PLUS records on the COD Web site, particularly those with a pending or denied credit decision, to verify the records meet all necessary credit-related requirements to receive actual disbursements.

See Volume III, Section 1 of the *2015-2016 COD Technical Reference* for more information on credit-related updates we implemented in EDEExpress 2015-2016 for PLUS and Grad PLUS records. You may also want to review the [April 17, 2015 electronic announcement](#) on the Department's Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) Web site for more information on how to address credit-related updates for PLUS and Grad PLUS loans using the April 2015 service release update for EDEExpress 2014-2015, Release 3.0.

- **Rebuild of Additional COD-Calculated Fields** – The Update Selected Records and Update All Records rebuild options now update additional COD-calculated fields displayed for loan records on the Usage Limit Applies sub-tab of the EDEExpress 2014-2015 or 2015-2016 Origination (Direct Loan) tab if provided in the Rebuild file. Additional fields that will now be included are Academic Year Length, Anticipated Subsidized Usage Period, Loan Period Length, Remaining Anticipated Subsidized Eligibility Period, Sum Anticipated Subsidized Usage Periods, Anticipated Non Credential Teacher Certification Subsidized Usage Period, Remaining Anticipated Non Credential Teacher Certification Subsidized Eligibility Period, Sum Anticipated Non Credential Teacher Certification Subsidized Usage Periods, Published Program Type, and Published Program Length (in Years, Months, or Weeks).

Disbursement Detail External Add (DLEXDISB)

- **Transaction Date Ranges Updated** – Release 15.0 allows only the following transaction date ranges when you are importing a Disbursement Detail External Add file (message class DLEXDISB) for the specified program year:
 - For 2013-2014 files, the valid transaction date range is 6/21/2010 to 12/28/2017.
 - For 2014-2015 files, the valid transaction date range is 6/21/2011 to 12/28/2018.
 - For 2015-2016 files, the valid transaction date range is 6/21/2012 to 12/28/2019.

How to Download the DL Tools Software and Documentation

You can download DL Tools and related user documentation from the FSAdownload Web site.

DL Tools Software

Instructions for downloading DL Tools are located in the “Downloading Documentation and Software from the FSAdownload Web Site” section of the *DL Tools for Windows Release 15.0 Installation Guide*.

Note: Some organizations restrict their users from downloading programs from Internet sites. If you have trouble downloading, contact your technical support staff first to ensure that you have full download rights.

User Documentation

The *2015-2016 COD Technical Reference, Volume IV (DL Tools)* provides record layouts, report mock-ups, and other additional details on using DL Tools Release 15.0.

Compatibility and Compliance

Microsoft Windows 7, Microsoft Vista, and Windows 8 Information

While we do not officially support the Microsoft Windows 7 or the Windows Vista operating systems for use with our EDESuite PC products (including EDEExpress and DL Tools), we have performed compatibility testing with both operating systems and resolved the majority of the issues discovered during testing.

- In 2012, we tested Microsoft Windows 7 as an operating system during the development of the 2012-2013 versions of our EDESuite PC software. Our test results indicated that schools should be able to proceed with use of Windows 7 without encountering any major issues, largely due to enhancements we implemented previously for the Windows Vista operating system. For more information on our Windows 7 testing, see the [August 8, 2012 electronic announcement](#) posted to the IFAP Web site.
- In 2008, we tested Microsoft Windows Vista as an operating system for our EDESuite PC products. We communicated our original Vista testing results, issues we discovered, and steps schools needed to take in order to run EDEExpress on Vista operating systems in the [September 18, 2008 electronic announcement](#) posted on the IFAP Web site. The vast majority of Windows Vista issues discussed in the announcement have been resolved, most recently in our 2012-2013 PC software releases.

Note: Federal Student Aid has not yet tested the Microsoft Corporation’s Windows 8 as an operating system for its PC software products, including DL Tools. We do not currently have a projected date for Windows 8 compatibility testing. Additional information will be provided as it becomes available.

Note: You will receive warning messages at the start of the DL Tools installation process if you are running the 64-bit version of Microsoft Windows or your PC has a 64-bit processor. Click **OK** to close these messages, which do not prevent you from proceeding with the installation process.

Section 508 Compliance

To comply with Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act, DL Tools is compatible with screen reader technology used by the visually impaired. Screen reader software cannot interpret color shading in DL Tools software entry fields or directly read the contents of software grid cells. To accommodate these restrictions, DL Tools includes the following features:

- All DL Tools fields that are shaded yellow to indicate they are required also display a “-R” after the software label. The “-R” indicates a required field.
- All DL Tools grids display “floating” text descriptions of the contents of grid cells when cells are selected. The text displays one cell above (or below, if the first cell is selected) the selected cell. The text lists Row number, Column title, and (if applicable) the current Value. Clicking once in a cell, or using the Tab key or arrow keys to move to a cell, displays the text. Clicking a second time, or using the Tab key or arrow keys to move from a cell, hides the text.

For more information on DL Tools functionality related to Section 508, see the help topic “Enable 508 Grid Functionality?” in DL Tools Release 15.0.

Getting Help

If You Have Technical Support Questions

Contact CPS/SAIG Technical Support if you have questions regarding DL Tools installation or functionality, have trouble accessing the FSAdownload Web site, or you require other technical assistance.

You can reach CPS/SAIG Technical Support Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. (ET), at **800/330-5947 (TDD/TTY 800/511-5806)**. You can also send e-mail inquiries, comments, or suggestions to CPSSAIG@ed.gov.

You can also post questions regarding DL Tools on FSATECH. FSATECH is an electronic mailing list for technical questions about Federal Student Aid systems, software, and mainframe products. For more information on subscribing to FSATECH, go to ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/services/fsatechsubscribe.html.

If You Have Questions Regarding the COD System

If you have any questions about the COD System, contact the COD School Relations Center at **800/474-7268** for Grants or **800/848-0978** for Direct Loans. You may also e-mail CODSupport@ed.gov.