Student Status Confirmation Report (SSCR)

Basic Information

Federal regulations require schools to report to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) on the current enrollment status of students receiving federal education loans. The accuracy of the data schools report plays a large part in keeping Direct Loan records and other federal loan records accurate and up to date. The reason: Students' enrollment status is key to establishing their loan status, including determining graduation dates, deferment privileges, and grace periods.

Laws & Regulations

- 34 CFR 685.309(b)

To comply with the federal requirement to update and provide current enrollment information, schools or their servicers use the electronic Student Status Confirmation Report (SSCR). The SSCR is a function in ED's centralized National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS), which tracks and monitors all Title IV student loan recipients. NSLDS sends SSCR Rosters to schools or their servicers through the Title IV Wide Area Network (Title IV WAN).

❖ Part of the Direct Loan amendment to a Program Participation Agreement with ED says that the school will sign up for Title IV WAN's Direct Loan functions. The school also needs to designate a contact person at the school for SSCR-related matters.

A school may use ED's PC-based SSCR software to report updates using batch processing, or it may make online updates directly to the NSLDS database. A school also has the option of hiring a third-party servicer to handle its SSCR reporting.

To meet SSCR requirements, a school or its third-party servicer must correctly match enrollment records with the records sent by NSLDS, confirm or update student enrollment status and other student information (including permanent addresses), correct any errors, and return the confirmed or corrected SSCR updates to ED.

ED helps schools fulfill SSCR requirements by publishing a *SSCR User's Guide*.

❖ Schools can order the *SSCR User's Guide* from NSLDS Customer Service.

❖ The SSCR process has also been the subject of several of ED's "Dear Colleague" Letters (DCLs), which are available on ED's Web site.

Using a Third-Party Servicer

If a school uses a third-party servicer to perform the SSCR function on its behalf, the school:

❖ must indicate in its Title IV WAN Participation Agreement (or otherwise report to ED) what servicer is handling its SSCR;

❖ should understand that the servicer is the destination point for receiving and sending all SSCR data–none of the SSCR data will be sent to the school; and

◇ Using a servicer doesn't mean, however, that the school can't go online with NSLDS. It can. The school is still able to use functions such as Borrower Tracking, Financial Aid Transcript, Overpayment, and Organization Contact screens.

❖ needs to coordinate online updates with its servicer to ensure that updates are applied in the correct order.

A third-party servicer has the same SSCR responsibilities as the school for which it is working. When choosing a servicer, a school should keep in mind that both the school and the third-party servicer are equally responsible and severally liable for any regulatory requirements that aren't met. If requirements aren't met, both the school and the third-party servicer could be subject to administrative actions by ED.

School Requirements

Federal law requires all Title IV schools—including Direct Loan schools—to verify and/or complete and return any SSCR that ED sends it.

Receiving and Sending the SSCR

Schools can update SSCR information in NSLDS either by batch processing or online.

❖ Batch Method—This allows a school to receive a single electronic SSCR file, fully process it in its computing environment, and transmit the SSCR data back to NSLDS—again as a single file.

❖ Online Method—This method allows a school to update the enrollment data directly by accessing NSLDS online. Online access is available through the 3270 Emulator (previously NetConnect) found in the EDconnect communications software provided to schools by ED.

In some circumstances, there are advantages to using the online method:

❖ If a school needs to correct just a few student records on a previously submitted SSCR or to make an ad hoc report about a change in student status, online updating works well.

Take a Look

See page 11-8 for details about ad hoc reports.

SSCR Roster Files can be processed on a personal computer (PC). The SSCR software that is part of the Title IV WAN package can display the SSCR Roster File records one at a time for updating and building the SSCR Submittal File to transmit back to NSLDS through Title IV WAN. The file can be worked on off-line (that is, without being connected to NSLDS) and transmitted when it's completed.

For information about using the SSCR software, call ED's Central Processing System (CPS) Customer Service at 1-800-330-5947. To order the 32-bit SSCR software (available in the latter part of 1999), the number to call is 1-800-615-1189.

Where to Call

- SSCR software, 1-800-330-5947
- 32-bit SSCR software (available in the latter part of 1999), 1-800-615-1189.

Types of SSCR Files

Three files are associated with an SSCR cycle:

❖ SSCR Roster File,

❖ SSCR Submittal File, and

❖ SSCR Error Notification File.

If NSLDS finds errors in a school's SSCR Submittal File, the school will need to create a fourth type of file, an SSCR Error Correction File. The school completes this file and sends it to NSLDS.

SSCR Roster Files

When ED sends an SSCR Roster File to a school, it contains a list of borrowers who are recorded in the NSLDS database as being enrolled at that school or as having withdrawn from that school in the past six months. Each student is given one of these six statuses:

F—full time

G—graduated

H—half time

L—less than half time

A—authorized leave of absence

W—withdrawn

Students who a school previously reported to NSLDS as having a "G" or "W" enrollment status remain in the school's SSCR Roster File for 180 calendar days from the reported date of graduation/withdrawal.

SSCR Submittal Files

Within 30 calendar days of the date the SSCR Roster File is placed in a school's Title IV WAN electronic mailbox, the school must review the data, make any needed changes, and send NSLDS an SSCR Submittal File through Title IV WAN. NSLDS retrieves the updated SSCR Submittal File from the school's Title IV WAN electronic mailbox.

Detail Records

Information on each student in the SSCR Roster File is listed in a Detail Record. The record contains basic student identifiers, as well as enrollment status information.

Each student's Detail Record contains the following student identifiers:

❖ Social Security number (SSN) (also called a record identifier),

❖ last name,

❖ first name (also called a record identifier),

❖ middle initial, and

❖ date of birth (also called a record identifier).

For Your Information

NSLDS uses a combination of three data items to match NSLDS's records with records sent from schools and other data providers. These items (SSN, first name, and date of birth) are called "record identifiers."

The school reviews each student Detail Record to make sure it is correct. To do this, information in the Detail Record must be matched to the student's records in the school's registration system.

❖ If the school determines that any of the provided student identifier data is outdated or incorrect, it updates the field (or fields) and adds the prefix "New."

❖ If a school uses its own student identifier numbering system to identify students in school registration records, it can enter that number in the School Identification Designator field that NSLDS provides specifically for this type of number. Schools may not change a student's SSN to make it match the school's student identifier number.

Each Detail Record also contains an enrollment-status review consisting of three enrollment-related fields that must be reviewed and, if needed, updated. The fields give:

❖ a student's anticipated completion date,

❖ the student's enrollment-status code, and

❖ the date the student's enrollment status became effective.

Updating the SSCR Roster File

In addition to verifying the five basic student identifiers and enrollment-status data listed earlier on this page, a school also might need to add information about students who are at the school, have Direct Loans, and do not appear in the SSCR file.

❖ Students enrolled at the school, who receive Direct Loans, and who do not appear on the SSCR Roster File need to be added to the SSCR Submittal File the school sends to NSLDS.

If schools are not using ED's SSCR software, all updates made in the SSCR Submittal File should be run through an error-checking or editing routine.

Reference

• *SSCR User's Guide*

❖ Any data that a school adds to the SSCR file or changes in the SSCR file must be formatted according to the record layout and field definition specifications in the *SSCR User's Guide*.

❖ Each Detail Record includes a Record Sequence Number; a school should never change this number.

Overdue SSCR

A school is required to submit its SSCR Submittal File within 30 calendar days of the date the SSCR Roster File was placed in the school's TIV WAN electronic mailbox.

A school that fails to return its SSCR Submittal File within the required 30-day time frame receives an overdue letter from ED. If the school still fails to respond, subsequent overdue letters are sent at regular intervals. The letters remind the school of its SSCR obligations and that ED has various enforcement options.

❖ **First overdue letter**—ED sends the first overdue letter to the school's financial aid administrator and registrar when an SSCR Submittal File has not been sent to ED by the required 30-day deadline.

❖ **Second overdue letter**—ED sends a second overdue letter to the school's president or chief executive officer (CEO), financial aid administrator, and registrar when the SSCR Submittal File is more than 18 days past the 30-day deadline. (This is 48 calendar days after NSLDS sent the SSCR Roster File.) The letter states that failing to return the completed roster to NSLDS could result in enforcement actions against the school.

❖ **Third overdue letter**—ED sends a final demand letter to the school's president or CEO, financial aid administrator, and registrar a week later, when the SCCR Submittal File is more than 28 days past the 30-day deadline. (This is 58 calendar days after NSLDS sent the SSCR Roster File.) This letter notifies the school that the matter will be referred to ED's Administrative Actions and Appeals Division with a request to initiate an administrative action against the school, such as a fine or limitation, suspension, or termination action.

SSCR Error Notification Files

After NSLDS receives and processes the data in a school's SSCR Submittal File, it sends the school an acknowledgment in the form of an SSCR Error Notification File. NSLDS always generates and sends an SSCR Error Notification File in response to an SSCR Submittal File, even when there are no errors.

If There Are No Errors

If the school's SSCR Submittal File contains no errors, the SSCR Error Notification File from NSLDS contains a count of the accepted Detail Records; no Detail Records are included for correction. The school does not need to respond to the SSCR Error Notification File that NSLDS sends. The school should, however, file it as proof that the school successfully completed the required SSCR cycle. An SSCR Error Notification File listing no errors documents that the school's SSCR Submittal File is accurate and that the school has complied with SSCR requirements.

If There Are Errors

If the school's SSCR Submittal File contains errors, the SSCR Error Notification File from NSLDS contains a count of both the accepted and rejected Detail Records. The SSCR Error Notification File lists the student Detail Records that have errors (which mean they were not processed), along with the error code that applies to each record.

❖ An SSCR Error Notification File containing errors must be corrected and returned, as an SSCR Error Correction File, to

NSLDS within ten calendar days of NSLDS having sent the SSCR Error Notification File.

◆ The errors can be corrected online; this is the case even if the initial SSCR Submittal File was returned using the batch process.

If the school does not respond within the required ten days, NSLDS will continue to send the SSCR Error Notification File on a regular basis to the school until the errors are corrected or the next SSCR reporting cycle.

◆ ED also will send the school an overdue letter (or letters) detailing enforcement actions that ED may take.

◆ Any unresolved errors will appear in the school's next SSCR Roster File in the next SSCR cycle; the unresolved errors and the length of time they have existed will be monitored by ED.

Take a Look

See page 11-6, for more about overdue letters and their contents.

Ad Hoc Reports

In addition to a school responding to NSLDS using its regularly scheduled SSCR cycle, there might be times when the school is required to make interim, off-cycle reports to NSLDS. These are known as ad hoc reports.

An ad hoc report is:

◆ an unscheduled submittal file (created on a mainframe or on a PC) that is sent to NSLDS; it contains Detail Records for students at the school whose enrollment status has changed, or

◆ online updating of student records using NSLDS's SSCR functions.

Any time an accepted student fails to enroll on at least a half-time basis, an enrolled student ceases to be enrolled on a half-time basis, or a student changes his or her permanent address, within 30 calendar days of learning of the change the school must notify NSLDS of the change in an ad hoc report.

Laws & Regulations

• 34 CFR 685.309(b)(2)

◆ The exception: An ad hoc report does not need to be submitted if the school will be sending an SSCR Submittal File to NSLDS within 60 calendar days. Because of this 60-day rule, a school that has six SSCR reporting cycles a year never needs to submit ad hoc reports.

For Your Information

See "Recommended Schedule" on page 11-11 for details on how to avoid the need to submit ad hoc reports.

Scheduling SSCR Cycles

A school selects its own schedule for receiving SSCR Roster Files. The selection is made using NSLDS online screens.

❖ If a school does not select an SSCR schedule, NSLDS sends rosters every other month during the academic year.

The schedule a school selects must meet the following ED requirements:

❖ In a 12-month period, a school must request between two (minimum) and six (maximum) SSCR cycles.

❖ All reporting cycles must be at least 60 calendar days apart (or, put another way, a school may not schedule SSCR rosters for successive months).

❖ Regular term-based schools (semester, quarter, or trimester) must complete at least one SSCR cycle each term.

◇ A summer session does not count as a term.

❖ Schools that do not use regular terms must complete at least two SSCR cycles each year. The SSCR cycles must be scheduled at least four months apart.

❖ A school may change its SSCR schedule at any time, as long as ED's requirements still are met.

Recommended Schedule

Selecting an SSCR cycle and meeting its deadlines fulfills the regulatory requirement that schools inform ED about status changes of students receiving federal student financial aid. ED's cycle scheduling advice is short and simple: "the more the better."

To this end, ED recommends that schools schedule an SSCR cycle every other month during the academic year. This schedule also eliminates the need for ad hoc reporting.

If a school cannot schedule SSCR cycles that often, ED suggests scheduling at least one or more cycles beyond the minimum requirement (which is two cycles); this reduces the amount of ad hoc reporting as much as possible.

Take a Look

See page 11-8 for details about ad hoc reporting.

❖ Schools might want to modify these recommendations to take heavy workload periods into account. Remember that when a school receives an SSCR Error Notification File (usually within several days of sending its SSCR Submittal File) if NSLDS notes errors, the school has ten calendar days from the date NSLDS sent the file to correct all errors and send the information to NSLDS. With the ten-day timetable, schools would, of course, want to avoid scheduling this part of the SSCR cycle at a point when their resources might be stretched to the limit.

Recommended Cycle Dates

The following table shows ED-recommended SSCR cycle dates for schools on different academic calendars.

Recommended SSCR Cycle Dates

Semester Schools	Quarter Schools	Other Schools
September	October	October
November	December	December
January	February	February
March	April	April
May or June	June	June
n/a	n/a	August

Schools may change their schedule at any time, as long as they continue to meet the minimum of two reporting cycles a year. ED recommends that schools not change schedules when ten or fewer calendar days remain before a current SSCR cycle point.

Required Response Periods

The following chart offers at-a-glance information about required school-response times in the SSCR process.

Response Periods

NSLDS...	School then...
Sends SSCR Roster File to school.	Reviews and sends SSCR Submittal File to NSLDS **within 30 calendar days** of the date the SSCR Roster File is placed in the school's Title IV WAN electronic mailbox.
Reviews SSCR Submittal File and sends SSCR Error Notification File to school.	Reviews SSCR Error Notification File. (A) If no errors, keeps file. (B) If errors, submits Error Correction File to NSLDS **within 10 calendar days** of NSLDS sending SSCR Error Notification File.

Processing Cycle

The listing that follows describes the entire SSCR cycle, step by step, showing which participant is responsible for each step. Regardless of how many times a year a school chooses to receive SSCR reports, each SSCR cycle must include the following steps:

First Phase—Generating and Updating the SSCR
NSLDS
❖ Generates the SSCR Roster File for a school and
❖ Forwards the SSCR Roster File to the school or its servicer.
School or its Servicer
❖ Receives the SSCR Roster File;
❖ Matches the SSCR Roster File against registration/enrollment records;
❖ Updates each student's enrollment status and effective enrollment-status date with valid codes;
❖ As needed, proposes changes to student identifiers for which the school is not the data provider (SSN, last name, first name, middle initial, and birth date);
❖ As needed, changes or adds student identifiers for which the school is the data provider (SSN, last name, first name, middle initial, and birth date);
❖ As needed, changes or adds student address data;
❖ As needed, for each new student adds a Detail Record to the file;
❖ Checks that the updated file contains valid data to reduce the likelihood that NSLDS will find errors; and
❖ Returns the updated SSCR Roster File, now called the SSCR Submittal File, to NSLDS within 30 calendar days of the date it is placed in the school's Title IV WAN electronic mailbox.
Second Phase—Generating and Receiving the SSCR Error Notification File
NSLDS
❖ Receives the SSCR Submittal File;
❖ Edits the SSCR Submittal File contents;
❖ Updates NSLDS with any enrollment-status changes;
❖ Captures proposed student identifier changes and new or changed address data;
❖ Returns the updated SSCR Submittal File, now called the SSCR Error Notification File;
◇ *If there are no errors*, the file contains a count of accepted Detail Records and no Detail Records are included for correcting; the SSCR Error Notification File is sent to the school or servicer as a confirmation record for its files.

NSLDS (cont'd)

◇ *If there are errors*, the file notes Detail Records containing errors, applicable error codes, and a count of accepted and rejected records; the SSCR Error Notification File is sent to the school or servicer to be corrected and returned to NSLDS.

❖ Forwards new and changed data to each affected data provider weekly (for Direct Loans, this is the Direct Loan Servicer); and

❖ Monitors the timeliness of the school or servicer's response, following up if necessary.

School or its Servicer

❖ Receives the updated SSCR Error Notification File AND

❖ Considers the SSCR cycle complete if all records were accepted by NSLDS (it then archives the file so it can be retrieved for proof of compliance and audit purposes);

OR

❖ Corrects any records where errors have been identified and

❖ Within ten calendar days of the date the updated SSCR Error Notification File is sent to the school, it returns corrected records to NSLDS as an SSCR Error Correction File.

Third Phase—Processing the SSCR Error Correction File

NSLDS

❖ Receives the SSCR Error Correction File from the school;

❖ Edits the returned Detail Records;

❖ Updates NSLDS with enrollment status changes;

❖ Captures proposed student identifier changes and new or changed address data;

> The third phase occurs only if the school's SSCR Error Notification File had NSLDS-determined errors and, because corrections are needed, the school must return an SSCR Error Correction File.

❖ Returns to the school for correction an updated SSCR Error Notification File, which includes any records containing errors, applicable error codes, and a count of accepted and rejected records. If there are no errors, the file contains a count of accepted records and no Detail Records to be corrected;

❖ Forwards the new and changed data to each affected data provider weekly (for Direct Loans, this is the Direct Loan Servicer); and

❖ Monitors the timeliness of the school's response, following up if necessary.

School or its Servicer

❖ Receives the updated SSCR Error Notification File;

❖ Considers the SSCR cycle complete if all records were accepted by NSLDS (it archives the file so it can be retrieved for proof of compliance and audit purposes);

OR

❖ Corrects any records where errors have been identified;

❖ Within ten calendar days of the date the updated SSCR Error Notification File is sent to the school, returns the corrected records to NSLDS as an SSCR Error Correction File; and

❖ Receives an updated SSCR Error Notification File from NSLDS.

◇ If the SSCR Error Notification File has no errors, the school keeps it on file.

◇ If the SSCR Error Notification has errors, this Third Phase repeats until there are no errors or the next SSCR cycle begins.

Next SSCR Cycle

NSLDS begins the next scheduled SSCR cycle by generating a new SSCR Roster File. The file reflects all changes applied from the last SSCR cycle, any ad hoc reporting, and any unresolved errors from the previous cycle.

The SSCR User's Guide and Customer Support

Reference

- *SSCR User's Guide*

For more detailed information about SSCRs and the SSCR process, schools can reference the *SSCR User's Guide.* It also contains:

- ❖ an overview of NSLDS,

- ❖ a discussion of how SSCR data is used,

- ❖ record layouts,

- ❖ instructions on using NSLDS online functions, and

- ❖ information on problem resolution.

To receive a copy of the *SSCR User's Guide*, contact NSLDS Customer Service at 1-800-999-8219.

Where to Call

- NSLDS Customer Service, 1-800-999-8219 from 8 am to 8 pm (ET).

NSLDS Customer Support also can provide information about the SSCR process and answer SSCR-related questions.