Overview

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) document is an introduction to the Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) process. It updates the COD FAQs posted to the Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) Web site on November 2, 2006.

Schools, third party servicers, and software providers can find detailed processing requirements and business rules in the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 COD Technical References on FSA Download. The 2007-2008 COD Technical Reference is also available on that Web site.

The COD Technical Reference contains key information to assist with the development and implementation of financial aid systems/software that will interface with the COD System.

The FAQs are organized into the following sections:

Common Origination & Disbursement Basics
COD School Relations Center
The COD Web Site
Sending/Receiving Data in the COD Environment
Promissory Notes
Frequent COD Data Edits
Reconciliation Tools for Schools
ACG & National SMART Grant

Common Origination & Disbursement Basics

What is Common Origination and Disbursement (COD)?
Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) is a streamlined method for processing, storing, and reconciling Academic Competitiveness Grant (ACG), National Science and Mathematics Access To Retain Talent Grant (National SMART Grant), Federal Pell Grant (Pell Grant), and William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) financial aid data.

What kind of COD training is available to schools?
Schools can participate in the following COD training:
  ➢ Federal Student Aid's annual conferences. These events were formerly known as the Electronic Access Conferences (EACs). For information on upcoming conferences, visit the IFAP Web site and click on Federal Student Aid conferences in the left-hand column.
  ➢ Schools may also access the Department of Education's Schools Portal Web site for additional information on upcoming COD events and training opportunities.
  ➢ Updated computer based training (CBT) available on the IFAP Web site at: http://www.ifap.ed.gov/IFAPWebApp/index.jsp

How often is the COD System changed?
The COD System is updated annually to implement new award years. Additionally, changes and/or updates to the COD System may occur during an award year as needed. The latest information on new and updated features to the COD System is posted on the IFAP Web site.

How do schools, third party servicers, and software developers obtain information about COD processing issues?
Schools, third party servicers, and software developers can obtain information about current production issues, news, and COD System functionality through various channels such as the COD Web site and the IFAP Web site. The following communication sources provide information to COD users:

> *COD Web Messages:* COD posts messages on the COD Web site that provide users with information about COD processing, maintenance, holiday schedules, and new release functionality.
> *COD Processing Updates:* The COD Processing Update provides information related to the Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) System and includes the following sections: COD News, Reports and Data Requests, Resolved Issues, Resolved Issues In Clean Up, and Current Issues. It is published on the COD Web site by 12:00 noon (ET). Detailed information regarding the COD Processing Update is available on IFAP at: http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/0319NewPostingPlanforCOD.html.

Each Friday the COD Processing Update is posted as an Electronic Announcement on the IFAP Web site. If you have not done so already, COD encourages you to become an IFAP subscriber.

1) Go to the IFAP Web site.
2) Click on the *Member Services* link, located in the blue bar on the bottom left side of the IFAP Web site. The next screen will display Username and Password fields.
3) Click on the *Click Here to Register* link located under the Login button. This brings you to the *IFAP User Registration* screen.
4) On the *IFAP User Registration* screen, enter your information into the required fields. Click on the Submit Registration tab at the bottom of the IFAP Registration screen.

Once you are an IFAP subscriber, you can customize your notification by going back to the *Member Services* area of the IFAP Web site and selecting the *Subscription Options* link to customize your subscription.

If you have any questions about the IFAP Subscription Notification, please contact the Customer Service Call Center at 800/433-7327 between 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M. (ET). Questions can also be e-mailed to: fsa.customer.support@ed.gov.

- > *Electronic Announcements:* Electronic Announcements are frequently posted on the IFAP Web site. These announcements provide updates on COD processing, functionality, and program requirements that affect both the Direct Loan, ACG, National SMART Grant, and Pell Grant programs as well as updates that affect only the ACG, National SMART Grant, and Pell Grant Programs.
- > *Direct Loan Bulletins*: Direct Loan Bulletins are posted on the IFAP Web site. These bulletins provide updates on processing, functionality, and program requirements that affect the Direct Loan Program.
- > *Network Messages:* Network Messages are placed in schools' Student Aid Internet Gateway (SAIG) mailboxes. These messages provide updates on processing, functionality, and program requirements that affect the ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant, and Direct Loan programs.

What process is used to resolve COD System issues?
Every COD System issue is reviewed and prioritized based on several impact criteria, including the number of students affected, the number of schools affected, and how the issue affects school funding. This method ensures resources are being focused on the overall critical areas.

When you report concerns to the COD School Relations Center via e-mail or phone, include specific examples of the issue and how the issue impacts your school and/or students. This information is forwarded to the issue resolution team and assists with the resolution and prioritization process.

Updates to priority issues are provided in the COD Processing Updates. Updates on individual issues are passed to you through your customer service representative (CSR).

COD School Relations Center

Who do I contact when I need assistance with COD?
Schools, third party servicers, and software developers may contact the COD School Relations Center, by phone or e-mail, with questions regarding COD. Customer service representatives (CSRs) are available Monday through Friday, 8:00 A.M. - 8:00 P.M. (ET) at: 800/4PGRANT (800/474-7268) for the ACG, National SMART Grant, and Pell Grant programs or 800/848-0978 for the Direct Loan Program. When prompted, enter the school's Pell Grant ID or Direct Loan School ID and the call will automatically be routed to the school's primary CSR. A voice mail message may also be left with COD Customer Service.

Does my school have a primary customer service representative (CSR) and what is his or her role?
Yes. The COD School Relations Center has assigned a primary customer service representative (CSR) to each school. CSRs are available to:

➢ Answer COD processing questions about the ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant, and Direct Loan programs.
➢ Assist in obtaining access to the COD Web site as well as provide tips on Web site navigation. The COD Web site is a great tool for processing and viewing ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant, and Direct Loan data.
➢ Assist with any additional concerns or questions regarding COD.

Additionally, there are a number of tools that alert CSRs to risk areas so they can work with schools to prevent any potential problems and meet regulatory and reporting requirements. Schools also receive support through the following customer service functions:

➢ Support to schools and third party servicers for testing school software applications with the COD System.
➢ Support for XML (Common Record) issues.
➢ COD School Relations Center outreach. Schools are notified when they have been identified as being impacted by a COD System issue.
➢ Specialized Reconciliation Team to assist schools in reconciliation and closeout.
➢ Updated communications about COD System processing and features (DL Bulletin, Network Messages, etc.).
➢ COD Processing Updates available on the COD Web site.
➢ Updated FAQs to share the answers to questions asked by schools. The FAQs are posted on the COD and IFAP Web sites.

Do third party servicers and software providers have a primary customer service representative (CSR)?
COD has assigned primary CSRs to third party servicers and software providers. Schools using the same third party servicer are assigned the same primary CSR as that servicer.

Are there other sources of assistance for schools?
Yes. Schools can refer to the Sources for Assistance Guide available on FSA Download. This guide includes helpful contact information for all Student Financial Assistance programs including frequently called help lines, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and Web site addresses that are found in technical references and desk references published by the Department of Education.

Schools can also refer to the COD School Relations and CPS/SAIG- Quick Reference Guide. This reference tool helps schools determine when to contact the COD School Relations Center, Applicant Services Department, vs. CPS/SAIG for assistance. The reference guide is located on

the COD Web site on the "Today's Update" link, and is labeled "COD School Relations & CPS/SAIG-Quick Reference Guide". Suggestions for additional topics that should be covered in the guide should be e-mailed to CODSupport@acs-inc.com with the subject line of "COD/CPS Guide Recommendations."

The COD Web Site

What functionality does the COD Web site provide?
The COD Web site is a tool for processing and viewing ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant and Direct Loan data as well as assisting schools with trouble-shooting and problem resolution. The Web site provides the ability to access and/or view Grant and Direct Loan reports, allows Federal Student Aid, schools, third party servicers, and COD School Relations Center to view and use the same award data when questions arise.

How do schools and third party servicers get access to the COD Web site?
To gain access to the COD Web site, a school or third party servicer must designate a Security Administrator who is responsible for establishing other users at the institution and other associated procedures.

Schools can refer to the Electronic Announcement on the IFAP Web site, http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/0201UpdatedCODWebsiteSchools.html, for information on how to register a Security Administrator, as well as how to grant access to additional school personnel, modify established accounts, and perform other Security Administrator functions.

Third party servicers refer to the Electronic Announcement on the IFAP Web site, http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/UpdatedCODWebsiteThirdPartyServ.html, for the applicable information**.**

How do I reset my user access if I am locked out of the COD System?
Schools can refer to the June 15, 2007 Electronic Announcement posted on the IFAP Web site, http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/0615PreImplementation.html, for detailed information *about the new password reset and account unlock functionality*. A "Password Reset & Account Unlock User Guide" is attached to that announcement.

When do COD User IDs become deactivated?
The COD System will deactivate COD User IDs when:
  ➢ A first-time COD user who has been assigned a User ID and password has not accessed COD for a consecutive six-month period; and
  ➢ An established COD user who has been assigned a User ID and password has not accessed COD for a consecutive three-month period.

School Users 1-4 and Third Party Users 1-4 should contact their System Administrators to reactivate their COD Web site User IDs. System Administrators (School User 5 and Third Party User 5) are the only users that need to contact the COD School Relations Center to reactivate their COD Web site User IDs. If you have any questions about reactivating your COD Web site User ID, please contact the COD School Relations Center.

Is a login name and password required to view data on the COD Web site?
COD Web site users have the ability to perform school and batch searches, view news and current issues of the COD Processing Update without having to log on to the site. However, student or borrower specific information such as Name, Social Security Number (SSN), Date of Birth (DOB) and individual award data is governed by the Privacy Act of 1974, as amended, and is not displayed or made available without a valid log-on User ID and password.

To view data without logging into the COD Web site. Click on the "School Search" or "Batch Search" buttons on the top bar.
  ➢ By clicking on School Search, users can enter a school ID or school name to view basic information about the school, such as school name and address, financial aid administrator contacts, and some summary financial information by program type (ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant or Direct Loan).
  ➢ By clicking on Batch Search, users can enter a school ID and date range, or a specific batch ID to view the status of a particular batch along with the number of records that have been accepted, rejected, and corrected.

Does Federal Student Aid have web security measures in place?
Federal Student Aid has security measures in place to prevent security infringement. Federal Student Aid automatically blocks any IP address from accessing the Web site if subsequent activity within the COD System is determined to put the security of the COD System environment or data within it at risk. If an IP address is blocked, the COD School Relations Center contacts the COD user.

Additionally, the software used by the COD Web site prevents internet browsers (Example: Internet Explorer, Netscape) from storing (or cache) data protected by the Federal Privacy Act on personal computer hard drives. Refer to the Electronic Announcement on IFAP at: http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/1124CODWebsitesecurity.html.

How do schools update their contact information on the COD Web site?
Schools can update their Grant and/or Direct Loan program's contact information on the COD Web site from the School tab and then click on the "Financial Aid Contact" link. The screen will display the current information for your institution. You are then able to update or add new financial aid contact information by clicking on the "Update" or "Add New" tab.

Please keep in mind that the Financial Aid Administrator or Director of Financial Aid e-mail address is used to deliver time sensitive materials, containing critical COD processing related information, to your school. Please ensure this contact information contains the most current e-mail address.

Updates to school information such as school name, school address (including branches and locations), names of the Chief Executive Officer/President, Chief Financial Officer, and Director of Financial Aid must be reported by using the Electronic Application for Approval to Participate in Federal Student Financial Aid Programs (E-App). Once the information is submitted through E-APP, the COD Web site is normally updated with the new information in 24 hours. It may take longer if additional information is required by the School Participation Management Team.

A school can also refer to IFAP for information on updating school contact information in COD, http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/1004UpdatingContactInfo.html.

How do schools view ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant, and Direct Loan data for concurrent award years on the COD Web site?
The COD System has the capacity to process records for multiple open award years simultaneously. Schools and third party servicers can access the COD Web site and view specific award year data by utilizing the award year dropdown box and selecting the desired award year.

The award year dropdown box for the Direct Loan Program lists award years 2002-2003 through 2007-2008. The award year dropdown box for the Pell Grant Program lists award years 1999-2000 through 2007-2008. The award year dropdown for the ACG and National SMART Grant programs lists award year 2006-2007 and 2007-2008.

Additionally, once the program and award year are selected from the Default Program and Default Award Year dropdown boxes on the School Search screen, all subsequent School and Program screens will default to and display that program and award year until another default selection is made on the School Search screen or the School Summary screen.

The default award year will be 2007-2008 on all COD Web site screens except the Request Post Deadline Processing screen. (The Request Post Deadline Processing screen defaults to the award year for which processing has most recently ended.)

How often is ACG, National SMART, Pell Grant and/or Direct Loan disbursement information updated on the COD Web site?
Disbursement information is updated on the COD Web site after a school's batch is processed. However, the reflection of the actual disbursements in the school's disbursement totals (for example, Net Accepted and Posted Disbursements and Net Accepted and Posted Disbursements Applied) will not be reflected on the COD Web site until after the COD System's overnight processing/posting has been completed.

How are Direct Loan PLUS and Grad PLUS credit checks performed?
PLUS credit checks can be performed two ways.
➢ Schools can perform an abbreviated credit check by accessing the COD Web site Credit
Check Search screen. Enter the borrower's social security number and date of birth. Click
"Request Credit Check".
➢ Federal Student Aid performs a credit check when a Direct Loan PLUS or Grad PLUS
origination is received and a credit check has not been performed within the last 90 days.

Sending/Receiving Data in the COD Environment

Will COD process batches that contain improper XML formats?
Batches submitted to the COD System containing improper XML formats will not be processed
or displayed on the COD Web site. The COD School Relations Center takes a proactive
approach in contacting and assisting schools in this situation. The COD School Relations Center
notifies the school that the batch was not processed and provides the school with the reason and
action required to correct the batch.

**Where can schools find information on message classes that are to be used for sending and
receiving ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant, and Direct Loan records to and from
the COD System?**
The complete list of 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 message classes is available in the 2006-2007 and
2007-2008 COD Technical References at:
http://www.fsadownload.ed.gov/docsStudentAidGateway.htm.

**Will the Student Aid Internet Gateway (SAIG) Transmission Batch Header for a Response
acknowledgement contain the same data that a school submits on an incoming record?**
Since COD System implementation for the 2004-2005 Award Year, COD has increased the batch
number on the SAIG Transmission Batch Header from positions 42-67 to 42-91 allowing the
entire document ID to be returned with the Response.

**Where can schools find information on Country Code values that are submitted in a
Common Record document?**
Schools should refer to the 2006-2007 COD Technical Reference- Volume VI Section 4, or the
2007-2008 COD Technical Reference – Volume VI Section 4 for information on the appropriate
Country Code values that are submitted on a Common Record document. The technical
references are available on FSA Download.

How are batches acknowledged by COD System?
After the COD System receives a document using the XML Common Record, the system generates a receipt. A receipt is an XML document sent to schools informing them that the COD System was able to read the XML document they submitted.

The COD System also responds to each school's data submission files with a response that indicates what data were accepted and what data were rejected. For all Common Record documents, the response is returned in the latest XML Schema version that exists for that award year. Detailed information regarding the XML Schema versions used for Common Record documents is available in the COD Technical References on FSA Download.

When a school submits data via the COD Web site, the option is available to receive a response via the school's SAIG mailbox. Schools will not receive a response for Web-based transactions unless they have requested to receive Web responses under the COD Web site's School Options Information screen.

With the ACG and National SMART Grant implementation, schools must send and the COD System will acknowledge *certain* 2006-2007 Common Record documents using a new version— 2.0e—of the COD Common Record Extensible Markup Language (XML) Schema. In addition, the COD System will send *all* unsolicited system-generated responses using the new schema version. For complete information about the new schema version, school may refer to the Electronic Announcement posted on the IFAP Web site. Schools MUST submit 2007-2008 records using the new schema version.

Do schools and third party servicers have any options about how they receive responses?
Most schools as well as third party servicers have an option to receive a Full or Standard response for Common Records processed by the COD System. Check with your software provider to see which option may be required for the software you use; for example, EDExpress schools must receive a Full response. A Full response contains all the original tags (data elements) sent by the school, including any rejected data elements and reason codes. A Standard response contains only the rejected data elements and reason codes.

Where can schools and third party servicers view information on a batch submitted to COD?
Schools and third party servicers can view information on a batch submitted to the COD System by accessing the COD Web site's Batch Detail Information screen. The Batch Detail Information screen displays batch statistics and the status of all records in the batch.

Schools and third party servicers can also view the actual data they submitted to the COD System by accessing the Record Information screen. In addition, the response sent from the COD System can be viewed by accessing the Response Information screen.

To access the Record Information screen:
➢ Click on the Accepted link under the SSN, Award No, or Disb No columns on the Batch Detail Information screen. The Record Information screen displays.

<p align="center">Or</p>

➢ Click on the Rejected or Accepted with corrections link under the SSN, Award No, or Disb No columns on the Batch Detail Information screen. The Record Errors screen displays.
➢ From the Record Errors screen, click on the View Record button at the bottom of the page to view the data submitted to the COD System.

To access the Response Information screen:
➢ Click on the Accepted link under the SSN, Award No, or Disb No column on the Batch Detail Information screen. The Record Information screen displays.
➢ From the Record Information screen, click on the View Response button at the bottom of the page. The Response Information screen displays.

<p align="center">Or</p>

➢ Click on the Rejected or Accepted with corrections link under the SSN, Award No, or Disb No column on the Batch Detail Information screen. The Record Errors screen displays. From the Record Errors screen, click on the View Response button at the bottom of the page to view the response COD sent.

How do I correct data in COD?
Schools can make individual student data corrections by submitting the changed data elements (along with other required fields) via batch processing. Schools are also able to make individual student data corrections online through the COD Web site but do not receive responses for Web-based activities unless they have requested the option on the COD Web site School Options Information screen.

Additional information on correcting data is available in the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 COD Technical References on FSA Download.

<p align="center"><u>**Promissory Notes**</u></p>

Where do schools send paper Master Promissory Notes (MPN) and manifests for all award years?
Paper MPN manifests for all award years should be mailed to Montgomery, Alabama for processing. There are two separate mailing addresses, depending on how you choose to send the MPNs. Please use the correct address below to ensure timely receipt of the manifests by the processing center.

Overnight, Express, or Certified Mail should be sent to:
Department of Education

201 TechnaCenter Drive
Montgomery, AL 36117

Regular Mail should be sent to:
Department of Education
P.O. Box 5692
Montgomery, AL 36103

Are schools able to require borrowers to complete an MPN electronically?
No. Schools may not require borrowers to complete an MPN electronically. Borrowers may choose to complete a paper MPN. For more information, refer to Direct Loan Bulletin 03-42.

COD Student Identifiers & CPS Matching

What person information is used to establish a student on the COD database?
A student is established on the COD System database once required "person" information is successfully matched to identifying information on the Central Processing System (CPS) database. For an ACG, National SMART Grant and Pell Grant, the student's Social Security Number, Date of Birth (DOB) and first two letters of his or her Last Name are compared to CPS data. For a Subsidized/Unsubsidized loan, the student's SSN and DOB are compared to CPS data. If the match is successful, the student is established on the COD database with the COD Student Identifier. The COD Student Identifier consists of the current Social Security Number, current Last Name and DOB.

Which student identifiers does the COD System match against the Central Processing System (CPS)?
In addition to comparing student data to CPS to establish a student on the COD database (previous question), the COD System does a second match with CPS using the award transaction number when establishing awards on the COD database. COD uses the CPS Transaction Number submitted to pull data elements from CPS for processing the award.

When a record contains a new student with a new ACG, National SMART Grant, and Pell Grant Award, COD matches the SSN, Date of Birth, first two characters of the Last Name, and the CPS Transaction Number with data from CPS. When a record contains a new student with a Subsidized or Unsubsidized Direct Loan award, COD matches the SSN, Date of Birth, and the CPS Transaction Number with data from CPS.

Refer to the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 COD Technical References -Volume II Section 1 on FSA Download for complete identifier and matching criteria.

How do schools and third party servicers change student identifiers on the CPS and COD System?
In order to change Student Identifier information on the CPS, the school or student must submit a correction to the ISIR/SAR (this will result in a new transaction in CPS). After the correction has been submitted to the CPS, the school must send the changed data to the COD System reporting the old student identifier and the new student identifier (SSN, DOB, or Last Name). The COD System stores ONLY one Student Identifier for each student. The COD System does not store separate Student Identifiers for each award.

Where can schools view information the CPS has for students?
Schools may access the COD Web site's Applicant search screen to view student information received from CPS via the Abbreviated Applicant file.

Additionally, schools can view ISIR data the CPS has for students via FAA Access to CPS Online Web site. If you do not have access to the site, the Destination Point Administrator (DPA) for your TG number can register you as a user. Your DPA should go to the SAIG Enrollment site and select "ENROLL FAA USERS FOR ONLINE SERVICES" to enroll people as FAA Users. All FAA Users will receive a PIN, which is required for access to the FAA Access to CPS Online site.

Keep in mind that student identifiers such as Social Security Number, last name, and/or date of birth CANNOT be updated online. Updates to student identifiers can be made by the school creating an electronic ISIR correction or by the student submitting a corrected paper SAR. If you have any questions about the FAA Access to CPS Online Web site, please contact CPS/SAIG Technical Support at 800/330-5947 or by e-mail at CPSSAIG@ed.gov.

Which data elements are pulled from CPS?
The COD System determines if certain data elements are transmitted in Common Records or already exist for the student and award year on the COD database. If neither is true, the COD System will 'pull' these data elements from information provided by the CPS.

For each ACG, National SMART Grant and Pell Grant award received, the following data elements are pulled from the CPS information when absent on both the record and the COD database: Address, Loan default/Grant overpayment for student and citizenship status.

For each Direct Loan award received, the following data elements are pulled from the CPS information when absent on both the record and the COD database: Address, Loan default/Grant overpayment for student, citizenship status and Dependency status. *Note:* Citizenship status cannot be pulled from the CPS for PLUS/Grad loans and, therefore, is required on records for PLUS/Grad PLUS loans.

Frequent COD Data Edits

What resources can schools refer to for information on ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant and Direct Loan edits?
Schools can refer to the 2006-2007 COD Technical Reference Volume II & III Section 4, or the 2007-2008 COD Technical Reference Volume II & III Section 4 on FSA Download. Schools can also access the COD Web site's Help link for information on ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant and Direct Loan edits.

Are the COD data elements and edits the same for all programs?
The COD System takes advantage of commonality across programs to maximize the use of common data elements, edits, and a single student record. Student and parent recipient data, such as name, SSN, DOB, and other non-program specific data are stored once, so a student/recipient will have one identifier record in the COD System for all programs. Edits that relate to general school and student eligibility are also the same across programs. However, some program specific data, such as ACG, National SMART Grant, and Pell Grant disbursement amounts, do have unique data elements and edits and are applied as warranted.

Why are we receiving edits for "No eligible SSN, DOB, and last name combination match on CPS for a student"?
Schools will receive COD Edit 011, "No eligible SSN, DOB, and Last Name Combination Match On CPS for Student" when the Student Identifier (SSN, DOB, and Last Name) reported on the record cannot be found on the CPS. To resolve this edit, schools will need to:
 ➢ Verify the SSN, DOB or last name submitted with the CPS.
 ➢ Resubmit the record with the correct identifier(s) to COD, or update the CPS and resubmit the record with the CPS transaction number that matches the current identifier.

What edit does COD apply to ensure that Direct Loan disbursement dates are in chronological order?
If a school submits a Direct Loan record with a subsequent disbursement date that is not after the disbursement date of the first disbursement, the record is rejected for COD Edit 052 (First Disbursement Must be the earliest). This edit only applies to Direct Loan and ensures that all anticipated and actual disbursement dates are in chronological order.

Schools that encounter this edit should review the disbursement dates of the rejected record and first disbursement (disbursement with the First Disbursement Indicator [FDI] flag set to true). If the date of the Disbursement submitted is earlier than the date of the first disbursement, and that date is incorrect, update this information and resubmit.

Reconciliation Tools for Schools

What assistance does the COD School Relations Center provide for reconciliation?
The COD School Relations Center takes a proactive approach in assisting schools with reporting disbursements within the 30-day reporting requirement by performing outreach to schools. CSRs monitor reporting and drawdown activities and work with schools to prevent and resolve potential reconciliation issues.

What reconciliation tools does the COD Web site offer?
The COD Web site provides a number of reconciliation tools, including several reports and financial screens. Financial aid offices and business offices can both view drawdown and reporting activity as well as the data the COD System uses to "age" and "substantiate" the funds drawn. The following screens provide schools with information to assist in the reconciliation process:

➢ *School Funding Information* screen provides users with information on a school's total accepted disbursement amount, amounts that were not disbursed, and information schools may use to determine the amount of available funds.
➢ *School Summary Financial Information* screen allows users to view a summary of a school's ACG, National SMART Grant, Pell Grant and Direct Loan financial information.
➢ *Cash Activity* screen provides users with information on all drawdowns for a particular school.
➢ *Yearly Totals* screen provides users with information regarding a school's total awards, total amount disbursed, total number of duplicated recipients, and the total number of unduplicated recipients.

Are there reports available to help schools reconcile?
Yes. There are Direct Loan and Grant reports available to assist schools with their reconciliation processes. The COD System sends reports to schools' SAIG mailboxes, allows schools to view reports, and fulfills requests for reports via the COD Web site and/or batch process.

Schools can refer to the COD Technical Reference on FSA Download for a complete list of reports and the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 report layouts.

What if I need information that is not available in the standard reports I receive?
The COD School Relations Center has the ability to create customized reports (Ad hoc report) when the standard reports do not provide needed information. Schools should contact the COD School Relations Center for assistance.

What is Direct Loan (DL) Tools?
DL Tools is a stand-alone software designed to assist Direct Loan schools format the School Account Statement (SAS) report and electronically compare loans and actual disbursements listed on the report to those recorded in EDExpress or an external file. DL Tools tracks cash transactions (drawdowns and returns of cash) and compares them against cash transactions listed on the SAS report. It also has a Rebuild utility which can be used by EDExpress schools to rebuild lost or corrupted loan/disbursement data.

DL Tools can be downloaded from FSA Download. Schools can refer to the Electronic Announcement on the IFAP Web site, http://www.ifap.ed.gov/eannouncements/0706DLToolsR7.html, for more information on using DL Tools software.

Where do schools send refunds of cash for Title IV funds?
Funds should be returned using the e-Refund function via the Grant Administration and Payment System (GAPS) e-Payments Web site. After logging in to the GAPS e-Payments Web site, the school would click on the "Refunds" button on the Main Menu. On the "Refunds Menu" screen, the school would select the "Refunds to Closed Awards" option. Then, the school would click on "Initiate Refund" to begin the refund transaction.

Returning refunds via the GAPS e-Payments Web site is ***strongly encouraged***, however, the Department will continue to accept refund checks. If a school is unable to use the e-Refund method to make a refund, the school may send a check that includes the correct DUNS Number for the school and the complete 11-digit GAPS Award Number (P063P01xxxx with the school's GAPS award sequence number populating the "xxxx") on the front of the check.

Pell Grant funds for all award years and ACG and National SMART Grant funds for the 2006-2007 Award Year and forward should be returned to:

U.S. Department of Education
P.O. Box 979053
St. Louis, MO 63197-9000

Direct Loan funds for all award years should be returned to:

U.S. Department of Education
Attention: Refunds of Cash
P.O. Box 9001
Niagara Falls, NY 14302

For Direct Loan funds, please include a completed Direct Loan Refunds of Cash form with your check, and also note your school code and the award year on the check itself. Refer to DLB 06-09 for more information and the Direct Loan refunds of Cash form.

What is the Potential Overaward Project (POP)?
The Potential Overaward Project (POP) is a Pell Grant program project to address the situation where a Pell Grant award has been disbursed by multiple schools, and causes the student to exceed 100% of his or her Scheduled Pell Grant award.

Beginning with the 2002-2003 Award Year, a change was implemented to improve the efficiency in which POP situations are resolved. This change was implemented in response to numerous schools requesting a better process to resolve POPs that were "blocking" the eligible school and student from receiving funds under the previous process. This changes prevents the "blocking" problem by allowing the overaward to exist for 30 days while schools work together to resolve the issue.

When a POP situation occurs, Federal Student Aid will notify all schools involved via a Multiple Reporting Record (MRR), message class PGMRxxOP. Schools must research the student's status, confirm eligibility and reduce disbursements that should not have been made.

If schools do not reconcile POP situations within 30 days, Federal Student Aid will generate a "Negative Disbursement" and reduce ALL disbursements to zero ($0.00) at all involved schools. The eligible school may resubmit actual disbursement data to reinstate the student's award. If multiple schools resubmit disbursements, causing an overpaid status again, Federal Student Aid will send another MRR to all schools involved. To avoid this cyclic situation, schools should collaborate with the corresponding POP affected school(s) and correct the overpayment situation.

Information regarding the business rules pertaining to POP situations is available in the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 COD Technical References Volume II & III, section 1 on FSA Download.

What can schools do to prevent a POP condition from occurring?
Schools should enroll in the NSLDS Transfer Student Monitoring Process. Once a school is enrolled, NSLDS alerts schools to any Pell Grant disbursements made on the student or other changes that could affect the student's eligibility for Title IV student aid.

Schools can also review the COD Web site's Person Pell Information screen to check the Pell Grant Eligibility Used for the student. In order to view this information, schools will need to perform a person search on the Person Search screen using the student's social security number and then click on the Pell link.

On the Multiple Reporting Record (MRR), the Record Type values PB (Blocked Institution), PU (Unblocked Institution), RC (Blocker and Concurrent Enrollment), and BC (Blocked and Concurrent Enrollment) refer to the RFMS terms "Blocked", "Unblocked", and "Blocker". Since schools are no longer "Blocked" and "Unblocked", clarify how these values are defined for award years 2002-2003 and forward.

For award years 2002-2003 and forward, all Record Type values are defined as follows:

- ➤ CE-The student is concurrently enrolled.
- ➤ PB-The student is in a POP condition. The school listed on the MRR was the school **not paid first** that disbursed funds to the student.
- ➤ PR-The student is in a POP condition. The school listed on the MRR was the **first** school that disbursed funds to the student.
- ➤ RC-The student is in a POP condition and is concurrently enrolled. The institution listed in the MRR was not the last institution to disburse funds to the student.
- ➤ PU-The student is no longer in a POP condition.
- ➤ BC-The student is in a POP condition and is concurrently enrolled. The school listed on the MRR was the school **not paid first** that disbursed funds to the student.
- ➤ RC-The student is in a POP condition and is concurrently enrolled. The school listed on the MRR was the **first** school that disbursed funds to the student.

What should a school do if all attempts to work with the corresponding POP school have failed?

Federal Student Aid understands that mediation between schools may be difficult at times. When mediation has failed and the same school(s) continues to submit disbursement records for the same student, schools may contact the COD School Relations Center. Customer service representatives are available to assist in mediating and escalating POP issues to the Department's Federal Student Aid Operations area for resolution.

ACG & National SMART Grant

What resources can schools refer to for information on the ACG and National SMART Grant programs?

A school should refer to the communications posted on the IFAP Web site and to the 2006-2007 and 2007-2008 COD technical references for complete information about the ACG and National SMART Grant programs. Additional information regarding these programs is also available on the IFAP Web site, http://www.ifap.ed.gov/IFAPWebApp/index.jsp.
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