

# Session #37

## A Student Eligibility Toolkit: New Guidance for Decisions You Make

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# Today's Agenda

- Ability to Benefit
- High School Diploma
- Trial Periods of Enrollment
- Professional Judgment
- Satisfactory Academic Progress
- Retaking Coursework

# General Resources

- 6/18/10 NPRM preamble:

<http://www.ifap.ed.gov/fregisters/attachments/FR061810ProgramIntegrityIssuesNPRM.pdf>

- 10/29/10 final rule preamble and reg text:

<http://www.ifap.ed.gov/fregisters/attachments/FR102910Final.pdf>

- Dear Colleague Letters

- Q&As posted on OPE website:

<http://www2.ed.gov/policy/highered/reg/hearulemaking/2009/integrity-qa.html>

# Ability to Benefit



# Ability To Benefit

- Extends eligibility for federal student aid to students without high school diplomas after they successfully complete six credit hours or 225 clock hours of college work applicable to a degree or certificate offered by the institution

# Ability To Benefit

- If otherwise eligible, a student admitted as a regular student but who does not have a HS diploma is eligible if—
  - Successfully completed 6 credits or 225 clock hours of coursework applicable to a degree or certificate offered by the institution; or
  - Passed an independently administered test approved by the Department
- ATB is a student eligibility criterion; not an admissions criterion

# Ability To Benefit

- Can pay after completion of hours
- Can pay like a transfer student
- Cannot pay back to the beginning of the payment period
- “Testing out” does not satisfy completion of hours

# Ability To Benefit

- Improved oversight of test publishers, test administrators, and testing centers
- Directly addresses GAO–identified deficiencies

# Ability To Benefit

DCL GEN-11-08

- For Spanish-speaking students enrolled in a program taught in Spanish, no approved Spanish language test for ATB purposes
- Until a Spanish-language test is approved, institutions may use tests that would meet the current regulatory standards for assessing ATB for these students

# Ability To Benefit

Issues—

- Charging for ATB tests
- Assessment centers and certified test administrators
- Update on test approvals

# High School Diploma



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# High School Diploma

- Requires institutions to develop and follow procedures to evaluate the validity of a student's high school diploma if the institution or the Secretary has reason to believe that the diploma is not valid or was not obtained from an entity that provides secondary school education

# High School Diploma

- Additional question on the FAFSA requesting the name, city, and state of high school
- Dropdown box on FOTW with a list of high schools
- No requirement to collect high school diplomas
- No requirement to compare with information collected by the Admissions Office
- No comments related to high school completion status on the ISIR

# High School Diploma

- Diploma is a student eligibility item
- Procedure is a school requirement, not a verification item
- Action required if school *or* the Secretary has concerns about validity of a student's diploma

# High School Diploma

Issues—

- FAFSA list
- Prior year awards

# Trial Periods of Enrollment



# Trial Periods of Enrollment

DCL GEN-11-12, issued 6/7/11—

- Describes a type of trial period that allows a student to take classes on a trial basis before deciding to continue the program as a regular student
- By continuing, the student is responsible for program charges and, if otherwise eligible, is eligible for Title IV, Higher Education Act (HEA) program funds

# Trial Periods of Enrollment

- DCL builds on prior student-specific guidance
- Explains general purpose and parameters
- Doesn't describe every possibility
- Doesn't apply to orientation programs

# Professional Judgment



# Professional Judgment (PJ)

- In general—
  - PJ addresses special circumstances of an individual student, not a class of students
  - Documentation from verifiable third party is the goal
- Focusing today on student eligibility PJ

# Professional Judgment

DCLs GEN-09-04 (4/02/09) and GEN-09-05 (5/08/09)—

- Reminders that you can—
  - Recognize changes in financial conditions, including loss of job
  - Project income for a 12-month period
  - Adjust income and unemployment benefits
- DCLs are still in effect

# Professional Judgment

DCL GEN-11-04, issued 2/28/11—

- Reminds you about the combat pay exclusion and to consider changed circumstances, as appropriate
- Changed circumstances include—
  - Loss of income due to service member's return to college
  - Deployment of service member

# Professional Judgment

DCL GEN-11-15, issued 7/26/11—

- Reviews conditions and documentation to support dependency overrides
- Not exactly PJ but very similar
  - Student-by-student basis
  - Documentation is critical
  - Third-party documentation is the goal

# Professional Judgment

- GEN-11-15 includes examples & possible documentation
- Describes conditions that don't qualify—
  - Parent refuses to contribute
  - Parent is unwilling to provide info
  - Parent does not claim student as tax dependent
  - Student demonstrates self-sufficiency

# Professional Judgment

- Long-time policy requiring completion of verification before exercising PJ added to verification regulations
- Section 668.53(c) applies to applicants selected for verification—
  - By the institution
  - By the Secretary
- Does not mean verification is required before exercising PJ

# Satisfactory Academic Progress



# Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)

## Regulations—

- Continue flexibility to set SAP policies
- Require regular monitoring
- Eliminate automatic long term statuses
- Define terms and process for “warning,” “probation,” and “appeal”
- Give additional flexibility to institutions that check SAP more frequently than annually

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

Regulations (continued)—

- Organized by frequency of SAP review
  - Review each payment period—automatic “warning” status available
  - Review annually—no “warning” status
- Offer use of probation status and appeals to all institutions, at their option

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

Policy must require SAP review—

- At each payment period, annually, or less often than each payment period but always at the end of a payment period
- Including both qualitative (grade-based) and quantitative (time-based) measures at each evaluation

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

Policy must say how GPA and pace are affected by—

- Course incompletes
- Course withdrawals
- Course repetitions
- Transfers of credit

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

## Issues—

- Communicating new terms
  - Must tell students about new terms and how they work
- Use of probation with annual reviews
  - For a student on probation, must review SAP after one payment period even if SAP reviewed annually for all other students

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

Issues (continued)—

- Connecting pace & maximum time frame
  - Maximum time frame isn't new (150% of published length of program)
  - New quantitative component is pace
  - Graduated pace is allowed
- No amnesty provisions
  - Interrupted attendance could be basis for appeal



# Satisfactory Academic Progress

Issues (continued)—

- Treatment of remedial coursework
  - Must include in qualitative review
  - Option to include in pace component
- Implementing at clock hour schools
  - Electronic Announcement, posted 6/6/11
  - Offers review options for clock hour schools

# Satisfactory Academic Progress

## Guidance—

- Q&A on OPE website, posted 8/26/11
  - Describes treatment of coursework
  - Clarifies how new terms interact
- New questions added 10/19/11

# Retaking Coursework



# Retaking Coursework

- Amends full-time student definition
- Affects programs at term-based institutions
- Describes courses included in determining enrollment status for Title IV, HEA program purposes

# Retaking Coursework

## Issues—

- Previously failed courses
- Previously passed courses
- Same course number/different content
- Loan program considerations

## Guidance—

- Q&A on OPE website, posted 8/26/11

# Questions?



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# Contact Information

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