

Rights and Responsibilities Certification Document

Applicant's Rights, Responsibilities, Use of Social Security Number, and Certification for the Pennsylvania State Grant Program

To stay current with the status of your State Grant, please regularly check your record through Account Access via PHEAA's Secure Sign-In at www.pheaa.org.

All applicants have certain rights regarding their application for State Grant aid. When an applicant has been determined to be eligible for a State Grant, a student also has certain responsibilities as a recipient. This document explains these rights and responsibilities and also contains other important information. This document and other State Grant forms are available on PHEAA's website at www.pheaa.org. The rights and responsibilities of all students applying for State Grant aid are covered by 24 P.S. §5151, et. seq., and 22 Pa. Code §121.41, et. seq. To fully understand your rights and responsibilities, your full review of the aforementioned law is encouraged. Nothing stated herein supersedes the applicable law, and to the extent anything stated in this document conflicts with the applicable law, the applicable law controls.

Section I explains how to submit corrections, request reconsideration of State Grant status and provides general information. Section II explains the major State Grant eligibility requirements. Section III provides information on the Privacy Act and use of your Social Security Number. Section IV explains the certification and authorization which your signature(s) provides.

For purposes of this Rights and Responsibilities Certification Document, "Application" includes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and the Pennsylvania State Grant Form or Status Notice; and "institution" includes all schools or campuses that are affiliated through ownership or administration.

Section I: Eligibility Update, Reconsideration and General Information

Your Student Aid Report (SAR) will outline all of the responses provided on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). If you determine that any of the enrollment, school choice or program of study data is incorrect, you may correct that information through Account Access on PHEAA's secure sign-in at www.pheaa.org. If financial data or other information is incorrect, you must submit corrections through the FAFSA correction process available at www.fafsa.ed.gov. In rare cases, you may receive a printed State Grant Status Notice on which to submit updates. When submitting changes on this form, appropriate signatures must be provided and the form mailed to PHEAA.

For PHEAA purposes, those applicants who have been processed as veterans, no income or asset data was utilized in determining your eligibility. Income information has also been disregarded for those students who provided information regarding a recent death or a recent permanent and total disability of a parent or spouse. This special processing is limited to one academic year only, and family income information will be considered when determining your State Grant eligibility status in future academic years, if you apply. This special processing is also subject to the maximum award allowed per cost of the school the student is attending.

With regard to assets, the Agency does not consider nowU assets, the Pennsylvania 529 college savings plan, formerly Pennsylvania Tuition Account Program (TAP), when determining eligibility for State Grant aid. If Pennsylvania nowU assets have been included in the investments reported on the FAFSA, please indicate the value of your nowU account when completing the on-line State Grant Form, State Grant Status Notice or by contacting us in writing.

A State Grant is in the form of a public trust and failure to comply with the conditions under which the Grant is awarded will cause forfeiture of the Grant. **Once you have been determined to be a recipient and subsequently determine that you do not comply with the eligibility requirements as explained, or if you question your eligibility for any reason, you are required to report your situation in writing to the Pennsylvania State Grant Program immediately. Failure to do so may result in legal action against**

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you. Further, in signing the State Grant application and related documents, you authorize the institution to release any and all information to PHEAA which impacts State Grant eligibility.

Public Notice - By accepting a State Grant, the recipient authorizes PHEAA to make required public announcement of such. A student who objects to such announcement and, therefore, wishes to refuse the State Grant must notify State Grant and Special Programs in writing within 14 days of notice of their award.

Other Financial Aid - All scholarships, grants, tuition reimbursements (such as from an employer), waivers and all other aid must be reported directly to the financial aid administrator at your school. Your State Grant may be adjusted as a result of other aid that you receive.

Payment of State Grant - Payment of your State Grant is made directly to your school. Schools are required to verify student eligibility and must report questionable student eligibility to PHEAA and withhold crediting to your account in those cases.

Aid Deferments – The Agency may approve a request for deferment of an award for one academic term at a time. An award may not be deferred beyond July 1 of any given year. As such, State Grants may not be deferred from one academic year to the next; reapplication is necessary.

Apply for Renewal of Your State Grant - You must apply for State Grant aid each year by May 1. Your eligibility will depend on program funding and compliance with all eligibility requirements.

Application for Summer Aid - If you will be enrolled during the summer, it is your responsibility to file the separate Summer application available on-line. An academic year grant is normally processed for the period which begins in September and ends in May and does not cover the Summer term.

NOTE - With certain limited exceptions, applicants attending institutions in Maryland, New Jersey or New York are not eligible.

Section II: Major Eligibility Requirements for the State Grant Program

Academic Progress - A student is required to successfully complete a minimum of six (6) semester credits per semester (or the equivalent) for each part-time State Grant received and a minimum of twelve (12) semester credits per semester (or the equivalent) for each full-time State Grant received. Credits earned for repeat courses which were previously counted when State Grant progress was verified cannot be counted again. Academic progress is confirmed by the financial aid administrator at your school at the end of each academic year; failure to meet the minimum requirements means that you are ineligible for further State Grant aid until you have successfully completed the required number of credits. For example, a student receiving a full-time State Grant during the Fall semester and a part-time State Grant during the Spring semester must successfully complete a minimum of eighteen (18) semester credits before being eligible for any further State Grant aid. Full-time students progressing at the rate of only twenty-four (24) semester credits per year (or the equivalent), while meeting the minimum State Grant progress standard, will utilize all of their State Grant eligibility before completing their program. If you have any questions regarding your academic progress or credits which may be counted toward State Grant academic progress, you should contact your school financial aid administrator.

Criminal Offense - If you have been convicted of a criminal offense for which you are currently incarcerated, you must notify State Grant and Special Programs in writing. You are **NOT** eligible for a State Grant. You should also be aware that, by law, schools are required to report recipients to PHEAA who are incarcerated.

Default - Students who have defaulted (or have a claim of default pending) on any educational loan guaranteed or reinsured by the federal government, state government or institution are not eligible for State Grant aid and must notify State Grant and Special Programs of such default in writing. This also applies to programs where awards have been converted to loans due to failure to meet all eligibility or service requirements and the loan is in a default status.

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Domicile – Domicile is a person's true, fixed, and permanent home, the place to which the person intends to return whenever absent.

A student who is 18 years of age or older at the time of application must have been a bona fide domiciliary of Pennsylvania for a period of at least 12 consecutive months **immediately** preceding the date of application, exclusive of time the student spent while enrolled in an educational institution if the student came into or remained in Pennsylvania for the purpose of attending a postsecondary school.

A student who is under 18 years of age at the time of application must have a supporting parent or guardian (defined as a person with whom a minor child has lived and in whose continuous direct care and control the child has been for at least the last two consecutive years) who has been a bona fide domiciliary of Pennsylvania for a period of at least 12 consecutive months **immediately** preceding the date of application and who continues to be a Pennsylvania domiciliary until Fall term classes commence.

A student is ineligible if the student: (1) ceases (or the parent(s) or guardian ceases if the student is under 18) to be a domiciliary prior to the first day of classes of the academic year; (2) receives, due to residency, the benefit of in-state tuition or fees at a public postsecondary school located in another state, or (3) indicates that the state of legal residence is a state other than Pennsylvania. If you are registered to vote in a state other than Pennsylvania, you are considered to have abandoned your Pennsylvania domicile and may be ineligible for a State Grant unless and until you register to vote in Pennsylvania. If you again register to vote in Pennsylvania, you should contact State Grant and Special Programs immediately.

The Agency shall make the final decision on all matters pertaining to domicile.

Enrollment Status - Half-time is defined as at least six (6) semester credits but less than twelve 12 semester credits per semester (or the equivalent). Full-time is defined as the equivalent of at least twelve 12 semester credits of instruction per semester. For schools operating on clock hours, full-time is normally the equivalent of 450 clock hours per term or payment period.

Financial Data - Except in limited circumstances defined by PHEAA, the applicant, the applicant's parents and stepparents who completed the FAFSA and the applicant's spouse shall submit financial data that the Agency requests, and shall be required to authorize the Director of the Pennsylvania Personal Income Tax Bureau and the District Director of the Internal Revenue Service to release to the Agency, and upon request of the Agency, a copy or extract of the state and federal income tax returns filed by the applicant, the applicant's parents and stepparents, and the applicant's spouse for the tax years the Agency requests. In addition, the Agency may require the applicant, the applicant's parents and stepparents who completed the FAFSA, and the applicant's spouse to submit a copy of the state and federal tax returns directly to the Agency.

High School Graduation - You must be the graduate of an approved American high school (including those in American Territories, American military bases overseas and those located in foreign countries if they have American accreditation), the recipient of a Commonwealth Secondary School Diploma or the equivalency diploma of another state, or the recipient of another diploma accepted by the Pennsylvania Department of Education as fulfillment of the high school graduation requirement. Diplomas issued through distance learning or correspondence courses do not fulfill the high school graduation requirement.

Maximum Number of State Grants - Students are limited to a maximum number of State Grants even though some students may require additional terms to complete their program. Students enrolled in an associate degree program are typically limited to two academic year State Grants (2.00 grants). By law, no student may receive more than four academic year awards (4.00 grants) except students enrolled in bona fide five-year programs or specially approved five-year cooperative work-study programs. This is also true for students enrolling part-time, with each term award counting as one-half of a full-time term. A Summer State Grant is included in the maximum number of Grants that you may receive.

Processing Applications - Upon receipt of an application and the required family financial data, the Agency will review the application form for completeness. Where the form is found to be incomplete,

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additional data will be requested and final processing of the application will be discontinued until all requested data is supplied by the applicant, the applicant's parents and stepparents, and the applicant's spouse. **In its sole discretion, the Agency may terminate the processing of an incomplete application when the additional data is not supplied to the Agency after two notification requests for information.**

Program of Study - Your total program of study must be at least two academic years in duration and must be approved by PHEAA for eligibility in the Pennsylvania State Grant Program. Two academic years is defined as the equivalent of a minimum of 60 semester credits or 1,800 clock hours of instruction (1,500 clock hours in the case of programs leading to the Associate in Specialized Business or Specialized Technology degree). At least 50 percent of the total credits/clock hours needed for completion of the program must be earned through classroom instruction.

Undergraduate Enrollment - You must be enrolled as an undergraduate on at least a half-time basis (and must not have received or completed all requirements for your first baccalaureate or professional degree). Remedial, developmental, or foundation courses may, under certain circumstances, count toward the minimum number of credits necessary for enrollment (contact your financial aid administrator to discuss your circumstances).

Section III - Information on the Privacy Act and Use of Your Social Security Number

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires that each federal, state or local agency that asks for your social security number or other information must tell you the following:

1. Its legal right to ask for the information and whether the law says you must give it;
2. What purpose the agency has in asking for it and how it will be used; and
3. What could happen if you do not give it.

The number is needed to be sure we know who you are, to process your application, and to keep track of your record. We use your social security number in recording information about your college attendance and progress; and in making sure that you have received your money. If you do not give us your social security number, you will not receive aid under the State Grant Program. Pennsylvania State Grant applicants are hereby advised that disclosure of their social security number is and has been a requirement and a condition for participation in the State Grant Program since its inception. The Agency, without such an identifier, would have difficulty in maintaining proper program records. Section 7(a)(2) of the Privacy Act provides that an agency may continue to require the disclosure of an individual's social security account number where the agency required this disclosure under statute or regulations prior to January 1, 1975, in order to verify the identity of the individual. Beginning in 1966 with Form S-1A-66 (First Application), applicants have been required to answer all questions completely or face disqualification for grant assistance. All subsequent forms utilized by PHEAA contain the social security number or account number as the identifier of the applicant, including award announcements to the student and the financial aid administrator of the postsecondary institution.

The Board of Directors of PHEAA on February 27, 1969, adopted regulations including Article IV-Scholarship Program Requirements and Procedures, Section 4.4, dealing with processing of applications, which provide that all requested data must be received for scholarship consideration. In addition, based upon the same legal authority, PHEAA also requires the parent(s)' and spouse's social security numbers on the grant application. The parent(s)' and spouse's social security account numbers will be used by PHEAA to obtain from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, Bureau of Individual Taxes, information concerning the family's income. The information is necessary in order to evaluate the applicant's need for State Higher Education Grant funds. The applicant and his/her parent(s) and spouse authorize PHEAA to receive such data from the District Director of Internal Revenue and/or the Director of the Department of Revenue, Bureau of Individual Taxes, by signing the State Higher Education Grant Application.

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Section IV: Statement of Certification and Authorization

Irrespective of the use of singular or plural pronouns, the following applies to all persons that sign the 'Statement of Certification and Authorization.' By signing this application form, I/we authorize PHEAA for any year in which the applicant is considered for State Grant aid: to make public announcement of any State Grant award; to disclose to postsecondary institution(s) selected by the applicant and to others administering financial aid which may bear on eligibility under the application, all information on any application and any information, communication and/or documentation submitted to or acquired by the Agency at any time, including state and federal tax return filings obtained hereunder; to use the data from any application to determine the applicant's eligibility for State Grant assistance as necessary; to direct the Director of the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, Bureau of Individual Taxes, to submit to PHEAA a certified copy or extract of my/our Pennsylvania state income tax return(s) filed for the year(s) designated by PHEAA; and, to direct other federal, state and local government agencies to release to PHEAA information in their possession which may bear on my/our eligibility. I/we also agree to submit, or authorize PHEAA to obtain from the District Director of the Internal Revenue Service, a certified copy or extract of my/our federal income tax return(s) for the year(s) designated by PHEAA and that failure to provide such copies or authorization, when requested to do so by PHEAA, may result in ineligibility for State Grant aid and the requirement to refund to PHEAA previously awarded State Grants. I/we understand that all documents submitted to PHEAA become the property of PHEAA and cannot be returned.

I/we declare under penalty of the criminal laws of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that the information provided on the Pennsylvania State Grant Form, as well as any information that I/we subsequently submit, have been examined by me/us and to the best of my/our knowledge such information is true, correct and complete. If the Agency determines subsequent to the award of the State Grant, that the applicant was awarded a State Grant for which the applicant was not eligible, I/we agree to pay back the entire amount of the State Grant. Moreover, if the Agency determines that the ineligibility resulted from a misrepresentation, I/we agree to pay back to the Agency not less than three (3) times the amount of the aid received. I/we understand that Pennsylvania law permits the Agency to seek civil damages and criminal prosecution for such overawards and misrepresentations, which may include monetary fines and imprisonment.

I, the applicant, authorize and direct the institution at which I am enrolled to release to PHEAA any records or other information in the possession of the institution or any of its officers or agents which relate to my record at their institution or bear upon my eligibility for State Grant assistance. If a State Grant is awarded, I certify that it will be used only for tuition, fees, books, room or board.

By signing the 'Statement of Certification and Authorization', I certify that I have read and reviewed the entire 'Applicant's Rights, Responsibilities, Use of Social Security Number, and Certification for the Pennsylvania State Grant Program', and that I understand my rights and responsibilities.