



## *FAQ's – Frequently Asked Questions*

### *Opportunity Grant Program*

#### **1. What are the retention expectations of the program?**

The retention target is 70 percent for a full year -- students who start in summer/fall and finish spring quarter. For students who are in a program that is less than 45 credits, the retention would be 70 percent from beginning to the end of their program.

#### **2. Can non-citizens receive the Opportunity Grant?**

Yes. Non-citizens can receive Opportunity Grant funds if they meet the eligibility guidelines. It is unlikely that these students have a social security number and will not be able to submit the electronic FAFSA to the processors. A completed paper FAFSA may be substituted to show financial need should the college financial aid office choose to complete a manual review to meet this eligibility requirement.

#### **3. Can the Opportunity Grant be considered a scholarship?**

The Opportunity Grant may be treated as a scholarship. The grant is merit based (the student must provide evidence of commitment) and the student is part of a selection process (the Opportunity Grant application/interview). If the institution treats the grant like a scholarship then it may be included in the student's ratio of self-help for financial aid awarding purposes.

#### **4. Does the student need to be 18 years old to receive the grant?**

The student does not need to be 18 but needs to be matriculated into the college as an adult. Dual credit students or high school students are not eligible to receive the grant.

#### **5. Does a student need to have less than an associate's degree to be eligible for Opportunity Grants?**

The intent of the legislation is to recruit and retain underserved students for high-wage, high-demand pathways. The best definition of underserved would be a student without higher education experience or less than an associate's degree. While there are no specific legislative restrictions in awarding Opportunity Grant funds to students with associate degrees and/or higher, it would be advisable to award these students on a funds available basis.

Students holding a baccalaureate degree or higher and who qualify for federal student loans would not be eligible for Opportunity Grant funds as their financial need would most likely be met.

**6. How can I award the student the \$1,000 for books, supplies and tools?**

The Washington Financial Aid Association has determined the average cost of books and supplies is \$960 a year. Opportunity Grant students may receive up to \$1,000 an academic year for books, supplies and required tools. It is acceptable for a full-time student to receive an award of \$333 a quarter for books, supplies and tools or \$250 a quarter if they are attending four quarters (summer).

*Programs with higher initial quarter books or supplies/tools costs may adjust the award accordingly.*

This disbursement can be made directly to the student. If the student attends less than full-time then the award will need to be prorated.

**7. Should we use previous year income or current year income to determine eligibility?**

The institution may make its own policy to determine which year of income to use. With typical federal financial aid, the aid is based on the previous calendar year of income. However, your financial aid office may use Professional Judgment and base the aid on current calendar year income (with the remainder of the year projected).

**8. Can a student receive the Opportunity Grant before they apply for the FAFSA?**

While the student is applying for the FAFSA, they may receive the Opportunity Grant if they meet the eligibility guidelines:

- Washington resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012
- Enrolled in an Opportunity Grant-eligible program of study
- Family income that is at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level using the most current guidelines available from the United States Department of Health & Human Services
- Financial need based on the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

Once the FAFSA needs analysis had been returned and it indicates that the student does not have financial need, then the student may not receive Opportunity Grant funding for future quarters.

**9. Does the student need to be eligible for the FAFSA to receive Opportunity Grant funding?**

Students are required by the legislation to submit a FAFSA to document financial need. The FAFSA is used as an income eligibility measure. There are many students who are financially eligible for traditional aid resources, but don't receive aid because other factors make them ineligible. For example, they don't pass ability to benefit tests, they are in programs of study that aren't eligible for state and federal aid, they are in default status due to prior financial aid awards, etc. Therefore, many students who may not be eligible for traditional aid resources may be eligible for Opportunity Grant funding and participation.

**10. Do I need to determine independency/dependency on the initial Opportunity Grant application? If my student meets the definition of a dependent student on the FAFSA, do I need to gather parental income?**

On the initial Opportunity Grant application, the college may make the determination if they would like to collect independency/dependency information. If the college chooses not to determine dependency initially, they may base the first quarter Opportunity Grant award on their standard application and then future quarters of Opportunity Grant will be determined from financial need from the FAFSA.

If the student is deemed dependent on the FAFSA, then family income will be taken into consideration in determining financial need. If there are extenuating circumstances, the financial aid office has the option of using Professional Judgment to override dependency and use only student income.

**11. When does a student's clock start ticking on using the 45 credits of Opportunity Grant eligibility?**

A student may receive Opportunity Grant funding for 45 credits of eligibility but no more than three years from initial receipt of grant funds. Therefore a student's 45 credits of eligibility may be separated out from the student's three years of eligibility. A student will begin to use his or her 45 credits of eligibility when grant funds have paid for those 45 credits of tuition and fees. Once a student has been identified as an Opportunity Grant student either by receiving grant funds for tuition, books, supplies/tools, or by receiving wrap around services, the student's three years of eligibility begins to diminish.

An example would be a student whose tuition is being paid by another source but the Opportunity Grant is paying for books. The student's 45 credits of eligibility has not been used, but the student has begun to use his or her three years of eligibility. The student's 45 credits of eligibility will begin to diminish when the Opportunity Grant has been used to pay directly for the tuition and fees (up to 45 credits). Keep in mind that a student may not receive more than \$1,000 an academic year for books, supplies and mandatory tools.

Another example is a student who is in a vocational program that requires a student to take 20 credits per quarter. The college can make the decision to use Opportunity Grant funds to pay for two quarters at 20 credits each (40 credits total) and then 5 credits of the third quarter (45 credits of eligibility used total), or the college can fund 15 credits per quarter for three quarters (for a total of 45) with the student's other 5 credits per quarter being paid by the student or other financial aid/outside source funds.

**12. I have a student with 5 credits of OG eligibility remaining but the student has not used \$1,000 books and supplies. May I give the student full-time books and supplies if they are actually taking a full-time load?**

Yes, if the student's credit load is full-time then you may pay full-time books and supplies.

Once the student has used up his or her 45 credits of eligibility, then the student is no longer eligible for book and supplies even if three years has not passed.

**13. May I use OG funds to pay for a student's summer quarter tuition?**

If your college's summer quarter is the academic year's first quarter and tuition is due after July 1, 2008, then you may use 2008-09 OG. Check with your business/finance office for campus policy and procedures. For 2008-09, if summer quarter tuition is due on or before June 30, 2009 you may use 2008-09 OG. Again, please check with your business/finance office which may have its own policies in place.

**14. What if a student has very expensive books and supplies costs the first quarter but only attends part-time each quarter? Is there flexibility in prorating the award?**

The books and supplies need to be prorated if the student attends **less than full time**, but they may be prorated for the year rather than the quarter (this is different than traditional aid).

Example: If you have a CNA student taking 7 credits then they would be considered a ½ time student. Half-time or 50 percent of the student's \$1,000 books and supplies would be \$500 for the year. If the student has higher costs in the first quarter then you may use up to the \$500, but not exceed the \$500 for the academic year unless the student enrolls in ¾ or full-time credits in future quarters.

Of course a school may choose to go the traditional route of prorating each quarter – this above example is just an option.

**15. May OG pay for a repeated class?**

Yes, you may use OG to repeat a class (even if OG paid for it previously), but the repeated classed diminishes the students 45 credits of eligibility. Of course, the student must abide by your Satisfactory Academic Progress policy.

**16. What type of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy must my college implement?**

The OG legislation indicates that a student must maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average. If a student's cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0, the student may petition the college. The college has the authority to establish a probationary period until such time as the student's grade point average reaches required standards.

Other than the guidelines above, your college may decide on a complete policy. Your college may decide to use the same policy as traditional financial aid, or your college may allow OG students to receive OG even if they are on suspension for traditional financial aid. Your Opportunity Grant team will decide the process. Make sure you define your policy and consistently apply it.

**17. Will OG pay for pre-requisites?**

The OG legislation allows 'required related' course to be included in the OG funding. If a student is required to take a remedial math/English class or a pre-requisite in order to start their program, then these types of classes may be included in the funding. However, the student may only receive

45 credits of funding, including required related courses, so make sure the student understands this policy and has other funding sources to finish their program.

The risk with funding the pre-requisites is that the student may run out of funding then leave the program and affect your college's retention numbers. Once you have decided upon your local policy, define it in writing and consistently apply it.

### **18. How often may we award emergency funds?**

Individual colleges may decide to award emergency funding more than once a year for a different emergency, or the college may decide to only offer the funding once a year per student. It is up to the college to make the decision and define their procedures.

Example of awarding emergency funding more than once per year:

A student has a shut off notice for power and brings the documentation into the office. After reviewing the request, you (or your team) decide the student is eligible and award the student OG emergency OZI 'Other.' A few months later the student comes in and his or her car has broken down and s/he submits an estimate for repairs. After reviewing the student's request, you may decide to award the student OG emergency funds OZH 'transportation' due to s/he having a different emergency.

### **19. May we add an additional family member to the poverty guidelines if two family members are in college?**

The college may make the decision to add a family member to the poverty guidelines if a sibling is under 24 years old is in college at the concurrently. Just make sure you define your policy and consistently apply it.

### **20. Can we add high-demand, high-wage pathways to our approved programs list?**

Yes, please see [Criteria for Program Approval](#) for more information. Approved I-BEST programs are automatically approved Opportunity Grant programs.

### **21. How do you calculate a Full Time Equivalent Student (FTES)?**

FTES Calculations:

Quarterly FTES = Credits registered for the quarter divided by 15

Annualized FTES = Credits registered for the quarter or year divided by 45

Example 1:

Student registers for 12 credits. This student is full-time for financial aid, veteran's, Opp Grant, etc...purposes, yet is really only a .75 quarterly FTES

12 credits divided by 15 = .75 FTES

Example 2:

Student registers for 12 credits fall quarter, 17 credits winter quarter, and 16 credits in spring. This student is only .75 FTES fall, but is 1.0 FTES for the year.

12 credits + 17 credits + 16 credits divided by 45 = 1.0 FTES

Example 3:

Student 1 registers for 18 credits, Student 2 registers for 17 credits, and Student 3 registers for 20 credits, all fall quarter. The quarterly FTES is 3.67, while the annualized FTES is 1.22

Quarterly FTES—18 credits + 17 credits + 20 credits divided by 15 = 3.67 FTES

Annualized FTES—18 credits + 17 credits + 20 credits divided by 45 = 1.22 FTES