

**TITLE 133 LEGISLATIVE RULE
WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION POLICY COMMISSION**

**SERIES 42
WEST VIRGINIA HIGHER EDUCATION GRANT PROGRAM**

§133-42-1. General.

1.1. Scope: This rule establishes guidelines and procedures that will direct the operation of the West Virginia Higher Education Grant Program, hereinafter referred to as the Higher Education Grant Program or Grant Program.

1.2. Authority. -- West Virginia Code § 18C-5-1(d).

1.3. Filing Date. – February 29, 2024.

1.4. Effective Date. – March 29, 2024.

1.5. Sunset Provision. – This rule shall terminate and have no further force or effect on August 1, 2029.

§133-42-2. [Reserved].

§133-42-3. Definitions.

3.1. Academic Year. A period of time in which a full-time student is expected to complete the equivalent of at least two semesters or other approved academic term.

3.2. Commission. The West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission as defined in W. Va. Code § 18B-1-2.

3.3. Cost of Attendance. The estimated total amount it will cost a student to attend college during an academic year, including tuition and fees; housing and food for the period of enrollment; books and supplies for education; travel costs directly related to attendance; childcare expenses; costs related to a disability; and other costs determined by the educational institution to be educationally related.

3.4. Council. The West Virginia Council for Community and Technical College Education as defined by W. Va. Code § 18B-2-1.

3.5. Dependent Student. A student who is required to provide parental information on the free application for federal student aid because the student does not meet the criteria established by the U.S. Department of Education to be classified an independent.

3.6. Student Aid Index (SAI). The amount that a family is expected to contribute toward a student's education costs under the federal need analysis. For an independent student, SAI is the same as student contribution. For a dependent student, SAI is the same as the total of student and parent contributions.

3.7. Financial Aid Package. The total amount of financial aid a student receives during an academic year.

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3.8. Financial Need. The demonstrated need of an applicant for financial assistance to meet the actual costs of attending the eligible institution of choice. It is the calculated difference between a student's cost of attendance and his or her SAI.

3.9. Fiscal Year. The State fiscal year begins on July 1 and ends on June 30.

3.10. Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). An application that students must complete in order to apply for most forms of financial aid, including the West Virginia Higher Education Grant. The filing of a FAFSA by an individual who indicates West Virginia as his or her state of legal residence will be treated as an application for the West Virginia Higher Education Grant.

3.11. Full-time Student. A student enrolled in a minimum of 12 undergraduate credit hours per semester or other comparable period at an institution with a non-traditional calendar.

3.12. Grant. Financial aid awarded to students that does not have to be paid back. For purposes of this rule, scholarships are included within the definition.

3.13. Higher Education Grant Program or Grant Program. Financial aid program established in W. Va. Code § 18C-5-1, et seq. that provides grants to West Virginia residents based on financial need.

3.14. Independent Student. A student who is not required to provide parental information on the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA) because the student meets the criteria contained in the Higher Education Act of 1965 to be classified an independent student.

3.15. Participating Institution. An institution that is eligible to participate in the West Virginia Higher Education Grant Program and for which a participation agreement is in place.

3.16. Participation Agreement. A contract entered into between a participating institution and the Vice Chancellor for Administration that specifies the rights and responsibilities of the institution and the Vice Chancellor as they relate to participation in the Grant Program.

3.17. Title IV. The section of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, that pertains to federal student financial aid programs.

3.18. Undergraduate Student. A student who has not yet met the requirements for a bachelor's degree and who is deemed an undergraduate student by the institution.

3.18.1. A student who is enrolled in a program that results in the awarding of a bachelor's and master's degree simultaneously and continues to meet the eligibility guidelines for the federal Pell Grant program is considered an undergraduate student if he or she is in his or her first four years of full-time postsecondary education and has not previously received a bachelor's degree.

3.18.2. A student who is enrolled in a doctor of pharmacy program is considered an undergraduate student if he or she has not previously received a bachelor's degree and is deemed an undergraduate student by the institution.

3.19. Vice Chancellor for Administration or Vice Chancellor. Commission employee statutorily charged with overseeing the West Virginia Higher Education Grant Program or his or her designee.

§133-42-4. Administration.

4.1. The Higher Education Student Financial Aid Advisory Board shall provide financial aid expertise

and policy guidance to the Vice Chancellor for Administration.

4.2. The Vice Chancellor for Administration may use no more than three percent (3%) of the amount appropriated each year for the higher education grant program for financial aid administration, award processing, and information dissemination.

§133-42-5. Institution Eligibility.

5.1. Institutions of higher education eligible to participate in the Higher Education Grant Program are defined in W. Va. Code § 18C-5-2; *Provided*, That institutions that are no longer operational or authorized to confer degrees in West Virginia are not “approved institutions of higher education” as defined therein. Out-of-state institutions that have entered into reciprocal agreements with the Vice Chancellor pursuant to W. Va. Code § 18C-5-6 also are eligible to participate in the Grant Program.

5.2. An institution otherwise eligible to participate in the Higher Education Grant Program is excluded from participating by the Vice Chancellor for Administration if:

5.2.1. The institution does not have a signed participation agreement in place; or

5.2.2. The institution has been deemed ineligible to participate in federal student financial aid programs by the United States Department of Education; or

5.2.3. The Vice Chancellor determines, based upon audits and/or administrative site visits that the institution has mismanaged Higher Education Grant or other state financial aid funds or lacks adequate institutional controls to manage such funds properly.

5.3. Any institution deemed ineligible to participate in the Higher Education Grant Program may appeal the decision in writing within 15 days of receiving notification to the Vice Chancellor for Administration. The Vice Chancellor for Administration, whose decision is final, shall issue a written decision upholding or reversing the initial decision within 20 days of receipt of the appeal.

§133-42-6. Student Eligibility.

6.1. In addition to the criteria established in W. Va. Code § 18C-5-5, to be eligible for a higher education grant award, an applicant must:

6.1.1. Have earned a high school diploma or passed a high school equivalency exam; and

6.1.2. Plan to enroll or be enrolled at a participating Title IV-eligible institution as a full-time undergraduate student in a degree or certificate-producing program; and

6.1.3. Demonstrate academic promise (for new awards) or achievement (for renewal awards); and

6.1.4. Demonstrate financial need.

6.2. A new Higher Education Grant applicant may satisfy the academic promise requirement in one of the following ways:

6.2.1. An applicant who has earned college credit after high school graduation or since passing the high school equivalency exam demonstrates academic promise if he or she has earned a cumulative college grade point average (GPA) of 2.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale as determined by the participating institution. The applicant must meet the institution’s satisfactory academic progress standards.

6.2.2. An applicant who graduated from high school or passed the high school equivalency exam more than five years before enrollment or who has completed active military service and has not earned college credits after high school graduation or the high school equivalent before the date of enrollment demonstrates academic promise if he or she meets the admission requirements of the participating institution.

6.2.3. An applicant who has earned the high school equivalent within the last five years prior to enrollment and has not earned college credits after passing the high school equivalent exam demonstrates academic promise if his or her score meets the minimum score recommended by the Higher Education Student Financial Aid Advisory Board.

6.2.4. An applicant who does not fall within the categories described in Subsections 6.2.1., 6.2.2., or 6.3.3. demonstrates academic promise if he or she meets the admission requirements for a degree or certificate program of the participating institution and has a cumulative high school GPA of 2.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale.

6.3. A renewal higher education grant applicant satisfies the academic achievement requirement if the student has maintained a minimum overall grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, is meeting institution's academic progress requirement, and

6.3.1. If the student received a two-semester award, the student must have earned at least the minimum number of credit hours within the academic year as recommended by the Higher Education Student Financial Aid Advisory Board for renewal; or

6.3.2. If the student received a single-semester award, the student must have earned at least the minimum number of credit hours within the academic year as recommended by the Higher Education Student Financial Aid Advisory Board.

6.3.3. Institutions are responsible for determining whether renewal students have satisfied academic achievement requirements.

6.4. An applicant demonstrates financial need if:

6.4.1. He or she has a completed FAFSA on file with the United States Department of Education by a date to be determined by the Vice Chancellor for Administration; and

6.4.2. His or her cost of attendance is greater than the total of his or her SAI, as calculated from the FAFSA, and other financial aid; and

6.4.3. His or her SAI does not exceed an amount set by the Vice Chancellor; and

6.4.4. He or she has completed verification if selected by the U. S. Department of Education's Central Processing System (CPS) or the institution.

6.5. A student is not eligible to receive a Higher Education Grant award if he or she:

6.5.1. Previously has earned a bachelor's degree; or

6.5.2. Previously has received eight semesters of Higher Education Grant awards; or

6.5.3. Is not deemed to be an undergraduate student by the institution; or

6.5.4. Owes the institution or the Commission for a Higher Education Grant or other state financial aid overpayment unless the student has a written reimbursement plan in place.

6.6. "Residency" for purposes of W. Va. Code § 18C-5-5 and this rule, is determined as follows:

6.6.1. For dependent students, the legal residence of the parent(s) named on the FAFSA is prima facie evidence of the student's legal residence.

6.6.2. Students may provide documentation to the Vice Chancellor evidencing the required residence in the State of West Virginia.

§133-42-7. Awards.

7.1. Maximum Award.

7.1.1. No higher education grant award may exceed the amount of tuition and required fees at the institution.

7.1.2. For a student attending an institution covered by a reciprocity agreement provided by W. Va. Code § 18C-5-6, no Higher Education Grant award may exceed the maximum grant award provided for in the reciprocity agreement.

7.2. Award Cycles.

7.2.1. The initial award cycle shall occur in April preceding the beginning of each academic year.

7.2.2. Additional awards may be made throughout the year as funds become available.

7.2.3. Any award made after November 1 shall be only for the second semester.

7.3. Award Selection. -- The Vice Chancellor shall establish criteria to be used in award selection each year based on the amount of funding available for awards. In determining recipients and amounts of awards, the Vice Chancellor for Administration may consider applicants' relative levels of financial need, application filing dates, relative differences in tuition rates across institutions, and/or State policy priorities.

7.4. Award Use. -- A student may use a Higher Education Grant award to cover any part of his or her cost of attendance at an eligible higher education institution.

§133-42-8. Coordination of Higher Education Grant Program and Other Aid Programs.

8.1. All students seeking assistance through the Higher Education Grant program must apply for assistance through the federal Pell Grant program.

8.2. In no instance may a combination of the Higher Education Grant and any other grants, including tuition and fee waivers, exceed demonstrated financial need as determined by the institution.

8.3. Funding Priorities.

8.3.1. To the extent permissible under federal law, students shall use grant resources available through federal student financial aid programs before a Higher Education Grant award.

8.3.2. Students shall use grant resources available through other State student financial aid programs before a Higher Education Grant award.

8.4. Students may not receive funding from both the Higher Education Grant Program and any component of the Higher Education Adult Part-time Student (HEAPS) Grant Program, established in W. Va. Code § 18C-5-7, at the same time.

§133-42-9. Post-Award Changes.

9.1. If a Higher Education Grant recipient transfers from one participating institution to another participating institution, the grant is transferable upon the approval of the Vice Chancellor for Administration or his or her designee.

9.2. If a Higher Education Grant recipient's SAI increases after an award has been made, the award shall be withdrawn if the new SAI exceeds the maximum SAI set by the Vice Chancellor in any given year.

9.3. If a Higher Education Grant recipient terminates enrollment during the fall semester, the Vice Chancellor shall hold in reserve for the student the scheduled spring award unless notified otherwise by the institution.

9.4. If a Higher Education Grant recipient terminates enrollment for any reason during the academic year, the institution shall return to the Vice Chancellor the unused portion of the grant in accordance with the refund policy associated with Title IV funds. The institution is responsible for returning the unused portion of the grant even if the student does not request a refund from the institution.

§133-42-10. Payments.

10.1. The Vice Chancellor shall remit payment of Higher Education Grant awards directly to the institution.

10.2. An institution may not receive a payment unless the institution has completed the previous year's reconciliation process and returned to the Vice Chancellor any prior year balance payable to the Commission.

§133-42-11. Waivers.

11.1. A recipient may request a waiver of academic progression if the recipient withdrew from all courses during the semester as a result of:

11.1.1. Serious illness or major injury involving the student or an immediate family member; or

11.1.2. Death of an immediate family member; or

11.1.3. Other comparable extenuating circumstance.

11.2. All waiver requests must be submitted to the Vice Chancellor for approval.

§133-42-12. Appeals.

12.1. An applicant or institution may appeal in writing to the Vice Chancellor the denial of an application for an initial award or renewal award within 15 days of receiving notification of the decision. The Vice Chancellor shall issue a written decision upholding or reversing the initial decision within 15 days

of receipt of the appeal. The Vice Chancellor's decision is final.

12.2. The Vice Chancellor shall refer to the institution any applicant appeal of a decision concerning satisfactory academic progress that relates to credit hour completion for resolution consistent with the institution's procedures established for this purpose.

12.3. All appeals shall set forth in detail the grounds for the appeal. The decisions issued by the Vice Chancellor or the institution, as appropriate, shall address in writing each ground raised.

§133-42-13. Accounting, Reporting, and Auditing Requirements.

13.1. Before the end of each fiscal year, each institution's financial aid office must reconcile its Higher Education Grant records with:

13.1.1. The Commission's records of Higher Education Grant awards and disbursements; and

13.1.2. The institution's business office records of any grant disbursements by the Commission or the Council.

13.2. All participating institutions may be required to provide reports, which may include student level data, to the Commission from time to time, including the United States Department of Education's Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) and the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission's Annual Student Financial Aid Report.

13.3. All participating institutions are subject to financial aid audits.

§133-42-14. Reciprocal Agreements.

14.1. The Vice Chancellor for Administration may enter into reciprocal agreements with state grant and grant program agencies in other states that provide financial assistance to their residents attending institutions of higher education located in West Virginia.

14.2. The Vice Chancellor for Administration may permit West Virginia residents to use the Higher Education Grant to attend institutions of higher education in other states that have entered into reciprocal agreements.

14.3. Residents of West Virginia requesting financial assistance to attend institutions of higher education in other states pursuant to a reciprocity agreement provided by W. Va. Code § 18C-5-6 shall meet all of the eligibility standards set forth in Section 6 of this rule.