

Financial Aid Handbook

Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA)
George Mason University

Federal School Code 003749



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Office of Student Financial Aid Contact Information

The Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) at George Mason University has a dedicated team of financial aid professionals available to assist you and your family in financing your education.

Location: The OSFA is located on the first floor of Student Union Building 1 on the Fairfax campus.

Office Hours: The OSFA is open Monday to Friday, from 9am to 5pm, with the exception of university holidays.

Mailing Address:

Office of Student Financial Aid
George Mason University
4400 University Drive
MS 3B5
Fairfax, VA 22030-4444

Website: financialaid.gmu.edu

Email: finaid@gmu.edu

Office Phone: 703-993-2353

Office Fax: 703-993-2350

Contacting your Financial Aid Counselor

Undergraduate students are assigned a dedicated Financial Aid Counselor based on their last name:

Last Name	Counselor	Email
A – B – C	Dan Frank	dfrank3@gmu.edu
E – F – G – H – I – J – Y	Kevin Mayer	kmayer4@gmu.edu
D – O – P – Q – R – W	Akifa Ishtiaq	aishtia2@gmu.edu
L – M – N – U – V – X – Z	Tom Perdiou	tperdiou@gmu.edu
K – S – T	Bob Smith	rsmithz@gmu.edu
Law Students	Bob Smith	rsmithz@gmu.edu
Graduate Students	Jennifer Rakowski	jrakowsk@gmu.edu

Other Contacts

Financial Literacy Counselor	Vanessa DeShane	vdesbane@gmu.edu
Scholarships	Roz Moore	rmoore11@gmu.edu
Graduate Grants/Waivers and Athletic Scholarships	Larry Atienza	latienza@gmu.edu
Federal Work-Study Coordinator	Lady Ramirez	lramirez@gmu.edu

Federal Student Aid Contact Information

FSA Student Loan Ombudsman Group Contact Information

Web: <http://studentaid.gov/repay-loans/disputes/prepare>

Phone: 877-557-2575

Fax: 606-396-4821

Mail: FSA Ombudsman Group
P.O. Box 1843
Monticello, KY 42633

Federal Student Aid Complaint Website: <https://feedback.studentaid.ed.gov/>

National Student Loan Data System: https://www.nslds.ed.gov/nslds/nslds_SA/

Entrance and Exit Loan Counseling, Direct PLUS Loan Application: <https://.studentloans.gov>

Communication Policy

The Office of Student Financial Aid's primary form of communication with students is via the student's Mason email address. Please be sure to monitor your Mason email account regularly for important information, requests and notifications regarding your financial aid.

Deadlines

March 1:

For priority consideration of limited State and Institutional grant funds, students must submit their FASFA and all verification and other requested documents by **March 1** each year.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeals

Students appealing for the 2017 summer term must submit an appeal to the OSFA by June 30, 2017. Appeals for the 2017 fall semester must be submitted to the OSFA no later than one week prior to the start of the semester. Appeals received after this date will be reviewed for the 2018 spring semester only.

Financial Aid Programs

George Mason University participates in several Federal, State and Institutional Aid Programs. These programs include Grants, Scholarships, Federal Work Study and Federal Direct Student Loans. Descriptions of these aid programs and eligibility requirements can be found on the OSFA website at: [Types of Aid](#)

Mason Merit Scholarship Policy

Award amount

Merit award amounts are listed on student award letters. Awards are applied to tuition over four years of undergraduate study (maximum of eight semesters), beginning with the semester in which the student is admitted. Merit awards do not need to be repaid.

Renewal criteria

University and Early Identification Scholars must maintain a minimum 3.0 cumulative GPA in order to renew their

scholarship annually. Renewal of Admission Scholarships requires a minimum 2.75 cumulative GPA annually. Students who fail to meet this requirement will be notified of their award cancellation via email by the OSFA Scholarship Manager.

Enrollment requirements

Awards require full-time enrollment (minimum of 12 credits per semester).

Change of Residency

Merit awards may be reduced or cancelled if student residency status changes at any point in their academic career.

Transfer of scholarship

Matriculated students may request deferment of a merit-based admissions scholarship for one semester in the event that:

- They are enrolled less than full-time standing; or
- They are participating in co-op or internship; or
- They are taking a leave of absence for any other reason other than low academic performance

The student must notify the Office of Student Financial Aid & Scholarships for approval before leaving and upon re-entry.

Use of funds and combining additional scholarships/resources

Merit awards are designated for tuition only. Merit awards will be cancelled if a student receives any additional aid, scholarship, benefit or resource that pays full tuition. This applies to the receipt of additional Mason or non-Mason awards. Merit funds may be reduced if a student receives any additional aid, scholarship, benefit or resource that specifically pays the difference between resident and non-resident tuition costs. Students should notify the Office of Student Financial Aid if they anticipate receipt of any additional aid or resources.

Withdrawal policy

Merit recipients who fully withdraw from all courses in a semester are subject to a reduction or cancellation of their merit award for that term.

Cost of Attendance

The Office of Student Financial Aid establishes an estimated cost of attendance for each Mason student. The student's combined financial aid (including internal and external scholarships, federal and state financial aid and tuition benefits/resources) cannot exceed the established cost of attendance. If a student receives aid that exceeds the cost of attendance, the student's financial aid package, including merit funds, will be revised in order to stay within the student's cost of attendance. Every effort is made to first reduce loan funds awarded to the student, however some revisions of aid will result in a reduction or cancellation of merit or institutional grant funds.

Deferment of Admission

Merit award recipients who wish to defer their admission term should contact the Mason Office of Admissions. Merit awards are subject to reduction or cancellation due to residency status changes after deferring admission.

Financial Aid Packaging

Financial aid packages are created for students throughout the academic year. Applicants who file their FAFSA on or before the March 1st priority filing deadline and submit any outstanding documentation prior to March 1st will receive maximum consideration in the distribution of need-based funding resources according to funding criteria. Eligible applicants completing a file after the priority deadlines will be awarded as LATE applicants.

Due to limited funding, Mason cannot attempt to meet the full financial need of all students and due to the large applicant pool and limited funding allocations, not all students meeting the priority deadline are awarded funds from all programs. Institutional funds, not included in the initial packaging formulas below, may be used to replace and/or supplement as funds remain available.

Academic merit scholarships, awarded through the Admissions Office, who will send notification of the scholarship award directly to the student. These are awarded prior to need-based awarding.

Award packages are created based on expected full-time enrollment. Students must log on to Patriot Web to view and accept their awards.

The Office of Financial Aid will then determine a student's eligibility for Federal Pell Grant and Federal Supplemental Grant. Due to limitations in funding, Federal Supplemental Grant is awarded to "0 EFC" (Expected Family Contribution) students only on a first-come, first served basis.

For Virginia residents, eligibility for either the Commonwealth Grant or Virginia Guaranteed Assistance Program will follow. Because of limited funding from the state, not all Virginia residents eligible for these grants will receive them. State grants are awarded until they are exhausted.

Non Residents (out-of-state students) will be considered for Mason Out-of-State Grant on the basis of remaining need.

Federal Work Study (FWS) may be awarded if the student demonstrates need and has indicated on their FAFSA that they wish to be considered for Federal Work Study. Because of limitations in federal funding, not all students who indicate they wish to be considered for FWS will receive it.

Eligibility for Federal Direct Subsidized and Unsubsidized Loans will next be determined.

Packages will be re-evaluated based on changes in Cost of Attendance (e.g. student is less than full time, etc.) or receipt of additional resources either from George Mason or from external sources. If revisions to aid awards are made, notification is sent to the student via their GMU Email Account

Financial Aid Terms and Conditions

Academic Requirements for Financial Aid

In order to receive federal financial aid, students must maintain satisfactory academic progress (SAP) toward graduation. The OSFA evaluates academic progress annually at the end of each spring semester. If you meet the requirements for SAP and all other requirements, you could be eligible for federal financial aid for the following year (fall/spring/summer).

Code of Conduct

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of August 14, 2008 includes provisions requiring institutions participating in the federal Title IV student aid programs to publish and ascribe to a Code of Conduct. The Code of Conduct outlines prohibited practices related to the administration of federal student loan programs. The intent of the Code of Conduct is to ensure that institutions administer federal student loan programs in a fair and equitable manner and to prohibit any conflict of interest. As a participant in the federal Title IV student loan programs, George Mason University has adopted a Code of Student Conduct. This Code of Student Conduct and other Conduct policies can be viewed at <http://studentconduct.gmu.edu/>

Method of Disclosure

The OSFA provides information through various channels, including publications such as the university's financial aid website, PatriotWeb student portal, emails and catalogs (electronic and print). The OSFA emails important information to the student's Mason email address. The OSFA will use this as the primary means for contacting students. The OSFA uses the main OSFA website and email to notify students of any targeted or general announcements. Students may find consumer information topics throughout the OSFA website and at [Student Consumer Information](#).

Rights and Responsibilities

Your “Rights” Related to Financial Aid

You have the right to know:

- The cost of attendance
- The refund policy for students who withdraw
- What financial assistance is available from federal, state, and institutional sources
- Procedures and deadlines for submitting applications for financial aid
- How financial aid recipients are selected
- How your eligibility was determined, including all resources the aid office considered available to you
- How and when funds will be disbursed to you
- An explanation of each type of award you receive
- For any student loan you receive: the interest rate, total amount you must repay, when your repayment begins, the length of your repayment, and the cancellation and deferment provisions applicable to your loan
- For any Federal Work Study job: a description of the job, the hours you must work, the rate of pay, and how and when you will be paid
- The criteria used to determine [satisfactory academic progress](#) for financial aid purposes
- How to request a review of a decision by the Office of Student Financial Aid concerning your aid package

Your “Responsibilities” Related to Financial Aid

It is your responsibility to:

- Read directions thoroughly, complete forms accurately, and comply with deadlines
- Provide supplemental documentation as requested
- Read, understand, and keep copies of forms
- Repay student loans
- Complete entrance and exit counseling if you receive federal student loans while in attendance at Mason
- Notify the Office of Student Financial Aid of any change in your enrollment, housing, or financial aid status (including any scholarships or grants received from outside sources). Changes of address and enrollment status must also be reported to your lender if you have a loan
- Satisfactorily perform the work agreed upon in a Federal Work-Study job
- Know and comply with all requirements for continuation of financial aid, including [satisfactory academic progress](#) requirement

Terms and Conditions

Students receiving financial assistance at George Mason University are responsible for understanding the following Terms and Conditions prior to receiving any funds:

You understand that an offer of financial aid is based upon anticipated full-time enrollment for the academic year and that offers are contingent on the availability of funds. Payments and Cost of Attendance (COA) may be adjusted for three-quarter time, half-time, and less-than-half-time enrollment based on your enrollment as of census date. Visit [Paying For College](#) to review the COA in detail.

If you are offered federal student loan funds, you understand that undergraduates and students in [eligible certificate programs](#) must be enrolled in a minimum of 6 credits (graduates must be enrolled in a minimum of 4.5 credits) in the loan period to be eligible to receive any loan funds. Initial loan offers are based on COA for enrollment of 12 or more credits for undergraduate and 9 or more for eligible certificate and graduate students, and may be reduced if enrolled in fewer credit hours.

You understand that financial aid offered is available for payment only if you have been officially admitted, are enrolled

in the required number of credits each semester, and meet all other disbursement requirements.

As a financial aid recipient, you understand that educationally-related funds received from outside sources (i.e. scholarships, fee waivers, University stipends, fellowships, etc.) are coordinated with all other aid offered and may result in changes to the types and amounts of financial aid offered by Mason.

You understand that once financial aid funds are available for payment (typically ten days before classes start) funds are credited to your student account. By accepting your aid offer in PatriotWeb, you authorize Mason to apply funds from your financial aid to pay for enrollment fees and other educationally-related financial obligations owed to the University. If your financial aid disbursement is not sufficient to pay the balance due, you are responsible for payment to the University by the appropriate deadlines. You are responsible for all University charges on your Mason student account, regardless of financial aid eligibility and the timing of disbursements. For additional disbursement details, visit

[Census Date and Financial Aid Eligibility](#).

You understand you must meet Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards according to the policies established by the Mason Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) which are consistent with federal guidelines. You understand these policies include: 1) meeting the completion rate percentage requirement (ratio of credits completed to credits attempted); 2) maintaining the specified GPA requirement; and 3) completing your degree objective within the maximum timeframe. Visit [Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy Page](#) to review the full SAP policy.

You understand that if you withdraw from all classes following payment of financial aid, you are subject to repayment of funds already received based upon Return to Title IV calculations per the U.S. Department of Education. The federal calculations determine the amount of financial aid you have earned as of the date of withdrawal from all semester classes. Your withdrawal from all classes may also result in a bill due to the University. Additional information regarding withdrawals and Title IV aid can be found [here](#). You further understand that future eligibility for financial aid may be impacted due to failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress standards.

You understand the OSFA reserves the right to review, modify, or cancel your financial aid award at any time due to changes in your financial status, eligibility for financial aid, or changes in federal, state or institutional fund availability. In addition, you understand your financial aid award may be cancelled, changed, or modified if the aid offered was based on error in determining eligibility for the amount of financial aid award offered, regardless if the error was made by you or the OSFA.

You understand that if you are awarded a Federal Pell Grant, federal regulations limit the amount you may receive in Pell grant funds. You understand that the maximum amount of Pell Grant funds you may receive is approximately equivalent to six years of full-time awards.

Federal Direct Subsidized Loan eligibility is limited to undergraduate students up to the full-time equivalency of 150% completion of the degree program (for example, up to 6 years for a 4-year bachelor's degree). Financial aid may not be received for repeating classes more than once in which a grade of D or better has been received.

You understand that you may receive financial aid at only one school for the same period of enrollment. You understand that you must re-apply and re-establish eligibility for financial aid each award year. All financial aid communications are sent via your Mason email account. It is your responsibility to monitor your email on a regular basis.

The Financial Aid Terms & Conditions listed above remain in effect, for the current and future aid years, unless you are otherwise notified. The Financial Aid and Scholarships Office reserves the right to make necessary updates.

IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT)

The IRS Data Retrieval Tool allows students and parents to access the IRS tax return information needed to complete the

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), and transfer the data directly into their FAFSA from the IRS Web site. If you are eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, we highly recommend using the tool for several reasons:

1. It's the easiest way to provide your tax data.
2. It's the best way of ensuring that your FAFSA has accurate tax information.
3. You won't need to provide a copy of your or your parents' tax returns to the OSFA. Students or parents who are married and filed as Married Filing Separately, are married and filed as Head of Household are not eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool.

To use the Data Retrieval Tool, complete the following steps:

- Go to fafsa.gov and select the "Start Here" button
- Log in using your FSA ID
- Select the "Continue" or "Make a Correction" button
- Select the "Financial Information" tab from the top of the page.

Instructions for the parent to request the parent IRS information:

1. Go to "Parent Financial Information" page
2. Answer the questions in the first box to see if you are eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool
3. If eligible, select which parent is providing information on the FAFSA
4. Enter the FSA ID for the parent providing the information
5. Click "Link to IRS" (*Note: If you previously transferred your tax return information from the IRS, or you indicate that you filed your tax return electronically within the last three weeks or through the mail within the last eleven weeks, then the **Link To IRS** button displays once you click the "View option to link to the IRS" hyperlink.*)
6. Review the information displayed and select the "Transfer My Information into the FAFSA" option

Instructions for the student to request the student IRS information:

1. Go to "Student Financial Information" page
2. Answer the questions in the first box to see if you are eligible to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool
3. If eligible, click "Link to IRS" (*Note: If you previously transferred your tax return information from the IRS, or you indicate that you filed your tax return electronically within the last three weeks or through the mail within the last eleven weeks, then the **Link To IRS** button displays once you click the "View option to link to the IRS" hyperlink.*)
4. Review the information displayed and select the "Transfer My Information into the FAFSA" option
5. Proceed to the Sign and Submit page

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy

Students must be making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) in order to receive federal and state financial aid. Academic progress of students is reviewed annually, at the end of each spring semester. Students who do not meet the minimum SAP requirements for financial aid after that review will be ineligible for financial aid and placed on financial aid suspension.

Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards:

Academic progress standards are measured in the following three ways:

1. Qualitative Standard: A minimum cumulative grade point average (**GPA**).

- Undergraduate students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0
- Graduate and doctoral students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 3.0
- Law students must maintain a cumulative GPA of at least 2.15

2. Quantitative Standard: A minimum **completion rate**.

Completion rates are calculated by the number of completed credit hours divided by the number of attempted credit hours. All students must have successfully completed at least **67%** of all hours attempted. Completion rate calculations include credits attempted at Mason as well as credits transferred into Mason.

For example, a student who attempted 50 credits and completed 45 credits has a 90% completion rate.

- Incompletes, withdrawals, failing grades and grades of NC (no credit) all count as attempted but not completed credit hours.
- If a student **repeats** a course, both the original and the repeated courses will count toward attempted credit hours but only one of the courses (if a passing grade is earned) will count toward earned credit hours.
- Students may receive financial aid one time only for courses they are repeating to improve a course grade.

3. Maximum Time Frame for Degree Completion:

In addition to the above GPA and completion rate requirements, all students must complete their programs of study by attempting no more than 150% of the hours normally required for completion. For example, if a program of study is normally completed with 120 credit hours, financial aid eligibility will be suspended once a student has attempted 180 credit hours or more. Repeated courses are considered in the maximum time frame requirement. Transfer credit hours accepted as part of a student's degree program will be counted as both attempted and completed hours towards their maximum time frame for degree completion. Therefore, a student in a Bachelor's degree program may attempt up to 180 credits before the student is considered to have exceeded the Maximum Time Frame. This 150% rule is also applicable to students who have changed majors or who seek a dual or second degree.

Please note: All courses attempted at Mason, regardless of the length of time that has passed since the last date of the student's enrollment will be factored into a student's SAP calculation.

Loss of eligibility due to lack of satisfactory academic progress:

A student who has lost eligibility to participate in federal student aid programs for reasons of academic progress will be ineligible for financial aid until they are meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress. Students who have been academically suspended from the university but who are subsequently given permission to re-enroll are not automatically eligible to continue to participate in federal, state, or institutional aid programs. Admissions decisions are separate from funding decisions.

Appeals:

Students have the right to appeal any decision of financial aid ineligibility. Appeals must be filed within 10 days of notification that aid eligibility has been lost. The appeal may not be based upon your need for the assistance, your lack of knowledge that your assistance was in jeopardy or courses taken at another institution during a "break" from attending Mason. An appeal would normally be based upon some unusual situation, condition or other mitigating circumstances which prevented you from passing courses, or which necessitated that you withdraw from classes. Examples of possible situations include documented serious illness, severe injury, or death of a family member.

How to Appeal

If your financial aid eligibility has been suspended due to low GPA, completion rate and/or maximum timeframe, you must request reinstatement by submitting the following forms and any supporting documentation to the OSFA. Students appealing for the 2017 summer term must submit an appeal to the OSFA by June 30, 2017. Appeals for the 2017 fall semester must be submitted to the OSFA no later than one week prior to the start of the semester. Appeals received after this date will be reviewed for the 2018 spring semester only. Students will be notified via email of the result of their appeal. **Please allow a minimum of two to three weeks for processing.**

1. [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) Appeal Form](#)
2. [SAP Student Educational Plan Form](#)

For SAP Appeals, students may contact an advisor from the [Academic Advising Contact List](#).

Appeal Approval Conditions:

Appeals can only be approved if the Financial Aid Appeals Committee determines:

- that the student will be able to meet minimum SAP standards after the next payment period;

OR

- that the student has agreed to follow an academic plan, that if followed, will ensure that the student can meet minimum SAP standards by a specific point in time.

If an appeal is approved:

Students whose appeals are approved will receive aid on a conditional basis. The conditions will be outlined in a letter emailed to the student. The Financial Aid Appeals Committee will continue to monitor the student's record to determine his/her financial aid status for future semesters. Students who fail to meet the conditions outlined in their individualized academic plans will not be eligible to submit a subsequent appeal.

If you do not have grounds for an appeal, or if your appeal is denied, you may still be able to regain your eligibility for future semesters. This is done by enrolling in courses at Mason at your own expense and meeting SAP standards.

Tuition Surcharge: 125 Percent of Degree

Undergraduate students who have established Virginia domicile and eligibility for in-state tuition will be subject to a surcharge if they exceed 125 percent of the credits required to complete a degree. The surcharge will be determined by the State Council for Higher Education in Virginia.

In calculating the 125% credit hour threshold, the following courses and credit hours shall be excluded: remedial courses; transfer credits from another college or university that do not meet degree requirements for general education courses or the student's chosen program of study; advanced placement or international baccalaureate credits that were obtained while in high school or another secondary school program; and dual enrollment, college-level credits obtained by the student prior to receiving a high school diploma.

Repeat Coursework

For federal aid (not state aid or institutional aid), if you have taken a course twice, and passed it at least once, you cannot take a course a third time and get federal aid for it. This may affect the amount of federal grants (Pell and SEOG) or federal loans (Direct Subsidized, Direct Unsubsidized, Perkins OR PLUS – Parent – Loans) in your aid award. This is a federal regulation which George Mason has to follow. Please note that a grade of "D" is considered a passing grade. If you took a course twice

and withdrew from it both times, or took a course twice and received an “F” in it, (or you got an “F” once and withdrew once) you can *still* get aid for a third try since you have never PASSED the course. The rule only applies when a student has taken a course twice, and PASSED it at least once.

Constitution Day and Voter Information

September 17 is Constitution Day and Citizenship Day (Constitution Day). This day commemorates the September 17, 1787, signing of the United States Constitution. Written in 1787, ratified in 1788, and in operation since 1789, the United States Constitution is the world’s longest surviving written charter of government. Its first three words — “We the People” — affirm that the government of the United States exists to serve its citizens. For over two centuries the Constitution has remained in force because its framers wisely separated and balanced governmental powers to safeguard the interests of majority rule and minority rights, of liberty and equality, and of the federal and state governments. Since 1789, the Constitution has evolved through amendments to meet the changing needs of a nation now profoundly different from the eighteenth-century world in which its creators lived.

To encourage all Americans to learn more about the Constitution, Congress in 1956 established Constitution Week, to begin each year on September 17th, the date in 1787 when delegates to the Convention signed the Constitution. In 2004, Senator Robert C. Byrd of West Virginia included key provisions in the Consolidated Appropriations Act of Fiscal Year 2005 designating September 17th of each year as Constitution Day and requiring public schools and governmental offices to provide educational programs to promote a better understanding of the Constitution.

Additional information and links regarding the Constitution can be found at [Constitution Day](#).

Voter Information

[Learn about Elections & Voting](#)

[Registering to Vote](#)

[Rock the Vote](#)

[Volunteering & Contributing to the Election Process](#)

Withdrawing from courses - Return of Title IV Funds (R2T4)

The OSFA is required by federal law to re-calculate federal financial aid eligibility for students who completely withdraw from all classes, stop attending, are dismissed, never attend, or take a leave of absence prior to completing 60% of a payment period or term. According to the regulations, the amount of Federal Title IV awarded to a student must be recalculated in these situations and any portion of the financial aid received that is considered to be “unearned” must be returned to the Title IV Program(s) from which it was received. Students will be billed by Mason for any amount due to the University as a result of Title IV funds that were returned that would have been used to cover University charges.

Please note that Mason uses the same return policy for state grants as is required for federal funds.

If you are considering dropping or withdrawing from all your courses, please contact your Financial Aid Counselor immediately regarding possible adjustments to your financial aid.

For a student who withdraws after the 60% point-in-time, there are no unearned funds. However, a school must still complete a Return calculation in order to determine whether the student is eligible for a post- withdrawal disbursement.

The calculation is based on the percentage of earned aid using the following Federal Return of Title IV funds formula:

Percentage of payment period or term completed = the number of days completed up to the withdrawal date divided by

the total days in the payment period or term. (Any break of five days or more is not counted as part of the days in the term.) This percentage is also the percentage of earned aid.

Funds are returned to the appropriate federal program based on the percentage of unearned aid using the following formula:

Aid to be returned = (100% of the aid that could be disbursed minus the percentage of earned aid) multiplied by the total amount of aid that could have been disbursed during the payment period or term.

If a student earned less aid than was disbursed, the institution would be required to return a portion of the funds and the student would be required to return a portion of the funds. Keep in mind that when Title IV funds are returned, the student borrower may owe a debit balance to the institution.

If a student earned more aid than was disbursed to him/her, the institution would owe the student a post- withdrawal disbursement which must be paid within 120 days of the student's withdrawal.

The institution must return the amount of Title IV funds for which it is responsible no later than 45 days after the date of the determination of the date of the student's withdrawal.

Funds to be returned are processed in the following order:

- Unsubsidized Direct Stafford Loans (other than PLUS loans)
- Subsidized Direct Stafford Loans
- Federal Perkins Loans
- Federal Parent (PLUS) Loans
- Direct PLUS Loans
- Federal Pell Grants for which a Return of funds is required
- Federal Supplemental Opportunity Grants for which a Return of funds is required

Please note that Mason uses the same return policy for state grants as is required for federal funds.

Withdrawing from courses offered in modules

A program is offered in modules if, for a payment period or period of enrollment, a course or courses in the program do not span the entire length of the payment period or period of enrollment. For all programs offered in modules, a student is a withdrawal for Title IV purposes if the student ceases attendance at any point prior to completing the payment period or period of enrollment, unless the school obtains written confirmation from the student at the time of the withdrawal that he or she will attend a module that begins later in the same payment period or period of enrollment.

The summer term at Mason is considered modular-based, as are fall and spring courses that are offered in multiple sessions throughout the fall and spring term. Therefore, students enrolled in summer courses or fall and spring modules may be considered withdrawn if they do not complete all of the days in the payment period that they were scheduled to complete. In these situations a recalculation of aid known as R2T4 (Return to Title IV) may be required and any unearned funds will be returned to the appropriate Title IV source. If the recalculation results in an over-award, the student will become ineligible for aid they may have already received. An over-award will require the immediate return of a loan, grant and other aid for which the student is determined to be ineligible and will prevent all future federal and state aid from being disbursed until the over-award is paid in full.

Students who drop or withdraw from any modular course and plan to enroll in future course in the same payment period or period of enrollment must immediately confirm their intent to re-enroll, in writing, to the OSFA. Students who fail to confirm their intent will be assumed to be withdrawn from the university and any aid disbursed will be adjusted or

cancelled. Please contact the OSFA immediately if you are dropping course(s) prior to the start date of the course(s), or if some of your classes are canceled after your aid has disbursed, or if you withdraw from a course(s), as this may result in a recalculation of your financial aid eligibility.

Citizenship Requirements

In order to qualify for Federal and State Financial Aid, a student must be a citizen or eligible non-citizen. Students that have been asked to provide the OSFA with proof of their US citizenship or DHS eligible citizenship status must present their original document in-person at the OSFA. Students that are unable to appear in-person must complete and follow the steps listed on the [Citizenship Affidavit](#) form. The OSFA is unable to accept citizenship documents from family members on behalf of the student. With the exception of U.S. Passports, expired documents are not acceptable.

Copies are not permitted unless indicated otherwise below. For additional information regarding citizenship, please visit: [Student Aid Guide - Citizenship](#).

Eligible Citizenship Status for Financial Aid:

- A U.S. citizen or national;
- A U.S. permanent resident or other eligible noncitizen;
- A citizen of the Freely Associated States: the Federated States of Micronesia and the Republics of Palau and the Marshall Islands. These students can only receive aid from some of the financial aid programs.

Documentation of U.S. Citizenship

- A copy of the student's birth certificate showing that the student was born in the United States, which includes Puerto Rico (on or after January 13, 1941), Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands (on or after January 17, 1917), American Samoa, Swains Island, or the Northern Mariana Islands, unless the person was born to foreign diplomats residing in the U.S.
- A U.S. passport, current or expired, except limited passports.
- A copy of Form FS-240 (Consular Report of Birth Abroad), FS-545 (Certificate of birth issued by a foreign service post), or DS-1350 (Certification of Report of Birth). These are State Department documents.
- A Certificate of Citizenship (N-560 or N-561), issued by USCIS to individuals who derive U.S. citizenship through a parent.
- A Certificate of Naturalization (N-550 or N-570), issued by USCIS through a federal or state court, or through administrative naturalization after December 1990 to those who are individually naturalized.

Documentation of U.S. Permanent Resident or other eligible noncitizen:

Lawful Permanent residents:

- The standard document is the Permanent Resident Card (Form I-551 since 1997) or Resident Alien Card (Form I-551 before 1997). Both forms are referred to colloquially as "green cards," though they have changed color over the years. Possessors of the older Alien Registration Receipt Card (Form I-151, issued prior to June 1978) should have replaced it with a newer card, but for receiving FSA funds it is acceptable as evidence of permanent residence.
- Permanent residents may also present an Arrival/Departure Record (CBP Form I-94) or the Departure Record (Form I-94A, which is used at land border ports of entry) with the endorsement "Processed for I-551. Temporary Evidence of Lawful Admission for Permanent Residence. Valid until _____ . Employment Authorized." The form will have an A-Number annotated on it and is acceptable if the expiration date has not passed.

Conditional Resident alien of the United States:

- Conditional Resident Aliens are eligible for aid if their documentation has not expired. I-551, I-94, I-94A, or a

passport with an MRIV bearing the statement “Upon endorsement serves as temporary I-551 evidencing permanent residence for 1 year.

Alien granted asylum or refugee status in the United States:

Refugees:

- Form I-94 or I-94A annotated with a stamp showing admission under Section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (INA).
- Old Refugee Travel Document (Form I-571)
- Newer U.S. Travel Document annotated with “Refugee Travel Document Form I-571

Persons granted asylum in the United States:

- I-94 or I-94A with a stamp showing admission under Section 208 of the INA.
- May also have the same travel documents described for refugees.

Alien paroled into the United States pursuant to Section 212(d)(5) of the INA:

Persons paroled into the U.S. for at least one year must provide evidence (such as having filed a valid permanent resident application) from the DHS that they are in the U.S. for other than a temporary purpose and intend to become a citizen or permanent resident. Their documentation must have a stamp indicating that the student has been paroled into the United States for at least one year, with a date that has not expired.

Alien who is a Cuban/Haitian entrant as defined by Section 501(e) of the REAA of 1980:

Students will have a stamp across the face of the I-94 indicating that they have been classified as a “Cuban-Haitian Entrant (Status Pending). Reviewable January 15, 1981. Employment authorized until January 15, 1981.” A document showing that the holder is a Cuban-Haitian entrant is valid even if the expiration date has passed.

Alien who is a conditional entrant:

I-94 with a stamp displaying “Section 203(a)(7)” indicating that the person was admitted to the United States as a conditional entrant prior to March 31, 1980.

Victims of human trafficking

- Student’s certification or eligibility letter from the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
- The spouse, child, or parent of a trafficking victim might be eligible for aid with a T-visa (e.g., T-2or T-3).

American Indian born in Canada, to whom the provisions of section 289 of the INA applies

Students who may be eligible for financial aid funds under the INA and who have a valid A-number should enter that on the FAFSA and indicate they are eligible noncitizens. Jay Treaty students who don’t have a valid A-number should enter “A999999999” in that field on the FAFSA and report that they are eligible noncitizens. The student must submit proof that such a student has 50% Native American blood and was born in Canada. To do so, the student should provide one or more of the following documents:

- A “band card” issued by the Band Council of a Canadian Reserve, or by the Department of Indian Affairs in Ottawa;
- Birth or baptism records;
- An affidavit from a tribal official or other person knowledgeable about the applicant’s or recipient’s family history;
- Identification from a recognized Native American provincial or territorial organization.

Battered immigrants-qualified aliens

Students may, with their designated children, be eligible under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) for federal public benefits, including Federal Student Aid. The student must obtain and provide documentation based on their case type: self-petition, suspension of deportation, or cancellation of removal. Please contact your assigned Financial Aid Counselor for information regarding the required documentation.

Ineligible Citizenship Status:

- Students granted **DACA** (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals).

- Persons with nonimmigrant visas** include those with work visas, students, visitors, and foreign government officials. Someone with a nonimmigrant visa isn't eligible for FSA funds unless she has a Form I-94 with one of the endorsements given in the eligible document section. Nonimmigrant visas include the F-1, F-2, or M-1 Student Visa, B-1 or B-2 Visitor Visa, J-1 or J-2 Exchange Visitors Visa, H-series or L series Visa (which allow temporary employment in the U.S.), or a G series Visa (pertaining to international organizations). Someone who has only a "Notice of Approval to Apply for Permanent Residence (I-171 or I-464)" cannot receive financial aid funds.

- Family unity status** individuals have been granted relief from deportation under the Family Unity Program. They may present an approved Form I-817, Application for Family Unity Benefits. Previously they were eligible for financial aid funds, but they are no longer eligible.

- Temporary residents** are allowed to live and work in the U.S. under the Legalization or Special Agricultural Worker program. Previously they were eligible for financial aid funds, but they are no longer eligible.

- Illegal aliens under the legalization (also called the amnesty) program** established by the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986 (IRCA). These individuals were given documentation that allowed them to work while their application for permanent resident status was being processed, but they aren't eligible for aid unless their application was approved. Documents they might have in the interim are the Employment Authorization Card (Form I-688A), Employment Authorization Documents (Form I-688B or the I-766), or the Temporary Resident Card (Form I-688).None of these documents qualifies a student for financial aid.

- Students with "Temporary Protected Status"** stamped on their I-94 forms. This is used for persons who are from countries that are in upheaval, but the status differs significantly from refugee or asylee because it provides no conversion to permanent resident status. These students are not eligible for financial aid funds.

- Alien who is employment authorized in the United States.** This indicates the expiration date or that there is no expiration. Employment authorization doesn't make the student eligible for FSA funds. Unless some eligible status is also checked or the student can provide other documentation that can be confirmed by the USCIS, the student isn't eligible for aid.

- Aliens not employment authorized in the United States.** This block is checked when an alien's status prohibits employment in the United States. Students with this status aren't eligible for aid. Citizenship and Immigration Services will initial and stamp the front of the G-845 in the signature block.

- Alien who has an application pending.** This is an alien waiting for a new immigration status or a change of status. A pending application for an immigration status doesn't by itself make the student eligible for financial aid funds; he must have an eligible status checked on the form or provide other documentation of an eligible status.

- Alien who is a non-immigrant.** A student with this status is not eligible for financial aid funds.

Appeals

Dependency Appeal

Students may submit a dependency appeal if they feel they should be considered independent from their parent(s) for financial aid purposes even though they do not meet any of the automatic independent criteria as outlined in Step 2 of the FAFSA. Please note that your parent(s) choosing not to pay for your education is not considered an estrangement

and is not grounds for an appeal. Dependency appeals may be submitted under the following circumstances:

1. A severe estrangement exists between you and your parent(s) which would make it unreasonable to expect you to be able to obtain the necessary parental data to complete the FAFSA. Examples of what would be considered a severe estrangement are if the student is in danger of abuse, either physical or mental.
2. If the student has been abandoned by their parents.

If a student wishes to pursue an appeal of their dependency status, he or she must schedule an appointment with their Financial Aid Counselor. Approval of a dependency appeal does NOT guarantee that status in future years. Dependency appeals must be re-certified every year. Your appeal will be reviewed by a committee of financial aid administrators and additional documentation may be required to substantiate your appeal.

Reduction of Income Appeal

The OSFA may consider appeals based on a reduction of income if the student or parent experienced a significant change of income due to mitigating circumstances.

Examples of mitigating circumstances that the OSFA will consider in reduction of income appeals include:

- No longer working/reduced work hours due to medical reasons or disability
- Student voluntarily leaves job or reduces work hours in order to return to school
- Layoff, contract not renewed, employment terminated, etc.

Examples of circumstances that the OSFA does NOT consider to be mitigating and therefore will not be considered in reduction of income appeals:

- Voluntary retirement
- Student or parent debt, including but not limited to mortgage, credit cards, taxes owed or car payments

To appeal financial aid eligibility based on a reduction of income, students must submit a 'Reduction of Income Appeal' form, along with all required documents to the OSFA. Students may request the 'Reduction of Income Appeal' form by reaching out to their Financial Aid Counselor via email. Financial Aid Counselor contact info can be found at: financialaid.gmu.edu, 'Contact Us'.

For the 2017-18 academic year, income changes that occur in 2017 must be documented for a minimum of six months before the OSFA can consider an appeal. When projecting YTD 2017 income (or any future earnings), the OSFA Appeals Committee reserves the right to deny appeals if there is insufficient information to accurately project future earnings.

If the OSFA recalculates financial aid eligibility based on projected future earnings, the OSFA will contact the student at the end of the projected tax year and request final wage and income statements. Any difference in projected vs. actual wages may be updated on the FAFSA and aid may be retroactively recalculated.

Reduction of Income Appeals for the 2018-19 academic year require copies of student and parent(s) filed 2017 IRS Federal Tax Returns. The 2018-19 'Reduction of Income Appeal' form will be available after January 1, 2018.

Students who are selected for federal verification must complete verification before an appeal can be processed.

Exclusion of Non-Recurring Income Policy:

The OSFA will not consider appeals to exclude certain non-recurring items from the FAFSA. Examples of these items include but are not limited to:

- death benefits
- one-time pension withdrawal/cash-out (ex. 401K)
- life, health or home insurance payouts
- lottery/gambling winnings
- proceeds from sale of a home - even if proceeds are used for other purchases
- income bonus/commission
- lawsuit settlement income
- interest income

Athletic Grant-In-Aid Appeal

If a student-athlete's athletic grant-in-aid is reduced or cancelled during the period of the award or is reduced or not renewed for the following academic year, the student-athlete has the opportunity for a hearing to appeal the decision. Student-athletes will have 20 business days from the date of the letter notifying them of the reduction or non-renewal decision to request an appeal of that decision.

Requests for appeal must be made in writing to the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) Director.

Upon receipt of the written request for appeal, the OSFA Director will promptly convene the Athletic Grant-In-Aid Appeals Committee to hear the appeal. The OSFA Director will notify the student-athlete of the date of the hearing.

The Athletic Grant-In-Aid Appeals Committee is comprised of staff members from various offices in the university and is chaired by the OSFA Director.

The student-athlete will be given the opportunity to present the basis for his/her appeal after which the Head Coach (or his/her designee) will present the basis for the reduction/non-renewal decision. It is preferable that all parties are present in person for the appeals hearing; however, if that is not possible, a party may participate in the hearing via teleconference. During both presentations, only committee members shall be allowed to address or question the presenters. In addition to hearing from the student-athlete and the Head Coach (or his/her designee), the committee may interview any other witness or review any other documents or materials it deems relevant.

Each party will be able to bring one individual to the hearing to serve as a support person. That individual will be permitted only to observe the hearing; he/she shall not participate in the hearing in any way.

The Associate Athletic Director for Compliance will be present for the hearing but will not be present during deliberations. The role of the Associate Athletic Director for Compliance is to provide the committee information about applicable NCAA rules and regulations.

Once both sides have presented their position and the committee has collected and considered any other evidence it deems necessary, the committee will meet in private to make a decision on the appeal. The committee shall use good faith efforts to make a final decision within 48 hours of the hearing. The committee shall evaluate whether the reduction/non-renewal decision was reasonable and consistent with the NCAA rules. If it finds that the decision was either unreasonable and/or inconsistent with NCAA rules, the committee shall grant the student-athlete's appeal.

The committee's decision will be determined by majority vote. Once a decision is made, the OSFA Director will notify both parties in writing of the final decision. Pursuant to NCAA rules, all decisions of the committee are final.

Appeals for Loss of Scholarships or Merit Awards

Students who have been sent a notification of loss of scholarship from the Scholarship Manager may appeal the loss by contacting the Office of Financial Aid at (gmsch@gmu.edu). Your letter or email should explain in detail the circumstances that affected your ability to meet the minimum standards for scholarship renewal. Documentation of those circumstances should be included to the extent possible. You will be notified by the Scholarship Manager if your appeal was granted. If you

are granted reinstatement of your scholarship by the Appeals Committee (or, in the case of University Scholars, the director of the University Scholars program), please note that no additional requests for scholarship reinstatement will be granted should you fail to meet scholarship standards a second time. All appeals for scholarship reinstatement must be received no later than one week prior to the start of your next semester (e.g. one week prior to fall for reinstatement for fall semester). Any appeals for scholarship reinstatement received later than one week prior to the semester will be reviewed only for the following semester.

Loss of Financial Aid Appeal

Please refer to the handbook section on Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) if appealing the loss of financial aid due to failure to meet SAP standards.

Study Abroad

Students may be eligible to use financial aid for study abroad. In order to determine financial aid eligibility for study abroad, students must make an appointment to meet with their assigned Financial Aid Counselor. Students must bring a cost breakdown or budget sheet for their study abroad program as well as one of the two forms listed below:

1. Intent to Use Financial Aid Form
 - This form, obtained from CGE, is only used for winter, spring break and summer study abroad programs
 - This form is completed prior to the Confirmation of Financial Aid form, listed below.
 - This form identifies potential financial aid eligibility for study abroad and assists CGE in determining if a student is required to pay a program deposit
2. Confirmation of Financial Aid Form
 - This form, obtained from CGE, is used for all study abroad programs
 - This form confirms the amount of financial aid a student has available to use for study abroad

Financial Aid disburses to the Fairfax campus ten days prior to the start of the student's study abroad program, but no earlier than ten days prior to the "traditional" Mason Fairfax spring semester. Financial Aid funds apply to any charges on the student's account, and any refund due is issued to the student (or parent, depending on aid program). It is strongly recommended that students sign up for direct deposit in order to receive their refund directly to their bank account, rather than mail. A Direct Authorization form can be found at studentaccounts.gmu.edu under 'Forms'.

In situations where study broad tuition/fees is charged at another institution, students are responsible for paying that institution directly. The Financial Aid Office cannot transfer your financial aid to another institution. At the time of financial aid disbursement, any credit balance will be issued to the student (or parent, depending on aid program). Students are responsible for using their refund and paying any balance owed to the other institution. It is strongly recommended that students sign up for direct deposit in order to receive their refund directly to their bank account, rather than mail. A Direct Authorization form can be found at studentaccounts.gmu.edu under 'Forms'.

Credits attempted/transferred will be evaluated at the end of the student's study abroad program/semester. Any credits attempted but not earned will be factored into the students Satisfactory Academic Progress.

Mason Online

Information contained in this portion of the handbook pertains only to graduate students in the fully online programs taught in 8 week modules. If you are an undergraduate or graduate student at Mason taking other online classes, please visit the following links for information about applying for aid: <https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/types-students> or <https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/how-apply-for-financial-aid>

Fully Online Graduate Programs Taught in 8 Week Modules

For information on how to apply for aid please see <https://www2.gmu.edu/admissions-aid/financial-aid/how-apply-for-financial-aid>. For the spring and summer semesters of the 2017-2018 year, you will need to complete the 2017-2018 FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid). For the 2018-2019 year (beginning with fall semester 2018) you will need to complete the 2018-2019 FAFSA. Mason's school code is 003749.

Students in fully on line programs taught in 8 week modules will follow the following calendar for 2017-18:

Spring Semester Start Date: Monday January 8, 2018
Spring Semester End Date: Monday April 30, 2018

The first 8 week module will run from 1/8/18 to 3/5/18. The second 8 week module will run from 3/6/18 to 4/30/18.

Summer Semester Start Date: Monday May 7, 2018
Summer Semester End Date: Saturday August 25, 2018

The first 8 week module will run from 5/7/18 to 7/1/18. The second 8 week module will run from 7/2/18 to 8/25/18.

Student Consumer Information

In accordance with the [2008 Higher Education Opportunity Act \(HEOA\)](#), George Mason University makes certain disclosures available to prospective and current students. Please refer to the university's [Student Consumer Information website for disclosures and resources](#).

Submitting Documents to the OSFA

Students that are required to submit additional documentation will be notified via email. New students who have not established Mason email accounts will be emailed at the email account listed on their Mason student record.

With the exception of any document requiring citizenship information, you may submit your documents/forms via mail, fax or in-person to the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA), which is located on the 1st floor of SUB I on the Fairfax Campus. The Office's fax number is 703-993-2350.

Citizenship documents must be submitted by the student in-person at the OSFA. If you are unable to appear in-person, please complete and follow the steps listed on the [Citizenship Affidavit](#) form.

After submitting your documents, please allow a minimum of 7-10 business days for processing. If any additional documentation is still required from you, you will receive another email from the OSFA. When all documents are verified, PatriotWeb will show a complete status.

Subsidized Loan Limitation – 150%

As of July 1, 2013, a first-time Federal Direct Subsidized Loan borrower is no longer eligible for the Subsidized Direct Loan Program and the interest subsidy if he or she exceeds 150% of the published length of the student's undergraduate degree program. This regulation defines a "first-time borrower" as someone who either has never borrowed a Subsidized Loan or is a student that has paid off all outstanding balances on either a Direct or Federal Family Educational Loan Program. The U. S. Department of Education wants to encourage students to obtain undergraduate degrees within a reasonable time frame and no longer wants to provide interest rate subsidies for students taking an exceptional amount of

time to obtain an undergraduate degree. Students, who change majors, drop classes or retake classes excessively, are most likely to be affected by this federal regulation. Presently, the interpretation of the 150% rule is actual credit hours completed versus credit hours attempted.

Please view the following link for additional information: [Direct Subsidized Loan Time Limitation](#)

Disbursements and Refunds

If you are eligible to receive financial aid, and have satisfied all of your financial aid requirements, your grant and loan funds (if applicable) will be disbursed approximately 10 days prior to the start of classes for the semester. At the “census date” (which is the last day students are permitted to add a course or drop a course with a full tuition refund), the Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) will verify your enrollment. If you increase or decrease your enrollment between the disbursement date and the census date, your financial aid will be adjusted accordingly to ensure that it is the appropriate amount for your enrollment. If you are issued a refund, then ADD credits or other charges to your account, you will owe money on your account and must pay this from the refund proceeds you received. After census date, no adjustments or increases will be made to your financial aid and all financial aid payments will be final.

What This Means for You

On census date, your enrollment will be locked and your financial aid will be adjusted accordingly. If your financial aid award was originally disbursed on full-time status and you are not enrolled full-time at the census date, your financial aid may be decreased to match your enrollment and this adjustment could result in a balance owed to the University.

Financial aid refunds will be issued only to those students who have excess funds on their account. Be advised that no refunds will be issued based on pending financial aid. The easiest way to receive a refund is to submit a direct deposit authorization to the Student Accounts Office: <http://studentaccounts.gmu.edu>.

Enrollment Requirements

Undergraduate students must be enrolled in a **minimum of six (6) credits** to qualify for the majority of financial aid programs. Funds may be reduced if enrolled less than full-time.

Graduate students must be enrolled in a **minimum of 4.5 credits** to qualify for federal loan funds. Funds may be reduced if enrolled less than full-time.

If you change your enrollment after the census date (with the exception of completely withdrawing from all classes), your financial aid will not be revised and you will be responsible for any additional charges. Students, who are completely withdrawn from ALL of their classes, may be responsible for returning financial aid they received prior to withdrawing from school. This determination will be made by the OSFA through a process called Return to Title IV. For more information on Return to Title IV, visit the [Withdrawing From Courses page](#).

Returning Loans

The OSFA will return federal loan funds on the student or parent’s behalf up to 14 days after the loan disburses to the student’s account. After 14 days, the student (or parent if PLUS loan) will be responsible for paying their loan servicer directly. Loan servicer contact information can be found at www.nslsds.ed.gov. Students and parents must submit requests to return loan funds in writing to the OSFA.

Students who wish to return private/alternative loan funds will need to make a payment directly to their lender.

Perkins Loan Servicing

The loan servicer for Perkins loans borrowed at George Mason University is ECSI. To make payments or manage your Perkins loan, please contact ECSI at <https://borrower.ecsi.net/> or 1-888-549-3274.

Verification

The OSFA follows the current US Department of Education guidelines for verification of the FAFSA and the guidelines therein. Students who are selected for verification are done so by either the US Department of Education or by Institutional Verification policies. Students who have been selected for verification will be notified via email and will be given instructions for viewing outstanding requirements in PatriotWeb. Students should submit the requested verification documents (as outlined in their PatriotWeb account) as soon as possible to receive aid for the current semester. Failure to return documents on time will delay awarding of student aid.

Only complete Verification Forms along with all supporting documentation can be processed. If the Verification Form along with all supporting documents is not received, the student's file will be incomplete and not ready for review by Processing Staff. Students are sent three requests for documents. The OSFA compares the data reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the verification form and supporting documents to ensure accuracy of information. If the verification process shows that adjustments/corrections must be made to the FAFSA, the OSFA will submit the corrected information electronically to the Department of Education for processing.

Selection of Applicants to be Verified

All students selected by the Department of Education will be verified. Students requesting a review of Special Circumstances for a Professional Judgment change to their FAFSA data will be verified before any determination of revisions are made. Other students may be verified if, during the course of normal aid processing, discrepant data is found.

Student Notification of Verification Changes

During the verification process, the OSFA will use the required submitted documentation to determine the accuracy of the information entered on the FAFSA. Necessary changes to the FAFSA will be made based on the results of the verification process, and submitted to the Federal Processor. The student will receive notice from the Federal Processor that a change or changes were made to the FAFSA. If the verification results in a change to the aid award, a revised award notification will be sent to the student's Mason email.

Notice of Federal Drug Violations—Title IV

In accordance with Federal regulations, George Mason University is required to annually notify all enrolled students regarding the impact on financial aid eligibility for a student who is convicted for any offense, during a period of enrollment for which the student was receiving Title IV, HEA program funds, under any federal or state law involving the possession or sale of illegal drugs will result in the loss of eligibility for any Title IV, HEAL loan, or work-study assistance (HEA Sec. 484(r)(1)); (20 U.S.C. 1091(r)(1)).

A student who has been convicted of an offense under any federal or state law involving the possession or sale of a controlled substance during a period of enrollment for which the student was receiving financial aid shall not be eligible to receive any federal student aid. Convictions do not count if the offense was not during such a period, unless the student was denied federal benefits for drug trafficking by a federal or state judge. A conviction that was reversed, set aside, or removed from the student's record does not count, nor does one received when he/she was a juvenile, unless he/she was tried as an adult.

The period of ineligibility for financial aid funds, depending on whether the conviction was for sale or possession and whether the student had prior convictions, is specified below:

If convicted of any offense involving the possession of a controlled substance, the ineligibility period is:

- First Offense. 1 Year from date of conviction
- Second Offense. 2 Years from date of conviction
- Three or more Offenses. Indefinite period

If convicted of any offense involving the sale of a controlled substance, the ineligibility period is:

- First Offense. 2 Years from date of conviction
- Second Offense. Indefinite period

If a student is convicted of both possessing and selling illegal drugs, and the periods of ineligibility differ from one another, the student will be ineligible for financial aid for the longer period of time.

REGAINING ELIGIBILITY: A student may regain eligibility for federal financial aid after the required period of time has elapsed since the conviction, or if the conviction is reversed, set aside, or removed from the student's record so that fewer than two convictions for sale or three convictions for possession remain on the record, or if the student can certify completion of a qualified drug rehabilitation program.

A qualified drug rehabilitation program must include at least two unannounced drug tests and must also satisfy at least one of the following requirements:

- . Be qualified to receive funds directly or indirectly from a federal, state, or local government program
- . Be qualified to receive payment directly or indirectly from a federally or state-licensed insurance company
- . Be administered or recognized by a federal, state, or local government agency or court
- . Be administered or recognized by a federally or state-licensed hospital, health clinic or medical doctor

It is the student's responsibility to certify to the Office of Student Financial Aid that the student has successfully completed a rehabilitation program.

FERPA

Privacy of Student Records

If you (the student) wish to grant permission to release information related to your student record, including academic, financial aid or student account, complete and return the [FERPA Release Form](#) to the Office of the Registrar. This form can be submitted via paper or online.

FERPA is a federal law that affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. Specifically, it affords students the right to: (1) inspect and review their education record; (2) request the amendment of inaccurate or misleading records; (3) consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in their education record; and (4) file a complaint with the Family Policy Compliance Office of the U.S. Department of Education concerning alleged failures of the university to comply with the act. George Mason University strives to fully comply with this law by protecting the privacy of student records and judiciously evaluating requests for release of information from those records. FERPA authorizes the release of "directory information" without the student's prior consent under certain conditions, which are set forth in the act. George Mason University has defined its "directory information" in accordance with the law. Please visit the Office of the University Registrar website at registrar.gmu.edu for additional information about student privacy and FERPA.

The University may disclose education records without student consent when...

- A student is seeking to enroll in another school

- It is requested by certain authorized government authorities
- It is connected to a student's financial aid request
- To organizations conducting studies on behalf of the campus or to accrediting organizations when necessary for that function
- To comply with a court order or subpoena and the campus has made an attempt to notify the student
- To "appropriate parties" in the event of a health and safety emergency
- To a parent when the parent shows proof of the student's dependent status (per IRS); (not related to custodial parent status)
- To victims of crimes of violence or non-forcible sex offense who requests results of the student discipline process for that offense
- To parents of students under 21 who violate campus alcohol or drug policies

Financial Aid Data Sharing

The OSFA is only permitted to release basic directory information for individual students to outside organizations and other third parties. The OSFA is unable to release FAFSA or award information even with written authorization from the student.

This change in policy was based on new guidance from the U. S. Department of Education's Privacy Technical Assistance Center (PTAC) regarding disclosing student data, and the following laws: the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); the Higher Education Act of 1965 (HEA) Sections 483(a)(3)(E) and 485B(d)(2) as amended, which was last reauthorized by Congress in 2008; and the Privacy Act,.

Students who need financial aid information for third parties may provide requested data directly to third parties using the following methods:

- Expected Family Contribution (EFC) can be found on the Student Aid Report (SAR), which is available by logging in to the student's FAFSA at <https://fafsa.gov/>. After logging in, the student should click the link to view the SAR.
- Financial Aid awards and estimated cost of attendance can be printed from <https://patriotweb.gmu.edu>. After logging in, click *Financial Aid, Award, Award by Aid Year*. Please note that awards for continuing students will be available beginning in June 2018.

Loan Origination Deadlines

The deadline to accept Federal Direct Loan offers each semester is **one week** prior to the end of the semester. Loans accepted after that deadline will not be processed.

Admission/Readmission Policy

Mason Admission Policies can be found in the University Catalog at: [Admission Policies](#)

George Mason University—Admissions Information

- GED/High School Diploma Requirements
- Policies Regarding Students with Felony Convictions/Incarcerated Students

- NACAC Standards of Admissions Practices

Students must have evidence of GED or final high school transcript with posted graduation dates. IF that is not received by the Office of Admissions by the start of the first semester, then a hold will be placed on the student's record which will prevent them from registering for future terms.

Incarceration:

Mason asks every candidate for Admission to answer the following question:

Any applicant to answers "yes" to the felony questions will be asked to submit an additional questionnaire and may be subject to criminal background check. All such applicants are reviewed by a university committee that consists of the Dean of Students, the Chief of Police (or designee), the Dean of Admissions, the Associate Dean of Admissions, the Chief Housing Officer and the Director of Graduate Admissions. Students who are currently incarcerated would not be offered admission.

Mason follows NACAC Standard of Principles of Good Practice (SPGP)

I. All Members—Mandatory Practices

A. Promotion and Recruitment All members agree they will:

1. Accurately represent and promote their schools, institutions, organizations, and services;
2. Not use disparaging comparisons of secondary or postsecondary institutions;
3. Not offer or accept any reward or remuneration from a secondary school, college, university, agency, or organization for placement or recruitment of students in the United States.
4. Not employ agents who are compensated on a per capita basis¹ when recruiting students outside the United

States, unless ensuring they and their agents conduct themselves with accountability, transparency, and integrity;

5. Be responsible for compliance with applicable laws and regulations with respect to students' rights to privacy.