COLLEGE *of* COASTAL GEORGIA
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

Policy: Financial Aid Processing

CITATION REFERENCE
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Policy Statement

In order to facilitate the processing and approval of financial aid applications, the College of Coastal Georgia will process requests for financial aid only after a student has been tentatively admitted to the College.

Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to clarify the processing requirements that will be followed by the College's Financial Aid Office.

Entities Affected By This Policy

All members of the Financial Aid Office, the Business Office, the Admissions Office, the Athletic Department, the Advancement Office and students seeking financial aid are covered by this policy.

Who Should Read This Policy

All members of the Financial Aid Office, the Business Office, the Admissions Office, the Athletic Department, the Advancement Office and students seeking financial aid should be familiar with this policy.

Contacts

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Website Address for This Policy

http://www.ccga.edu/Policy/StudentAffairsPolicies.asp

Related Documents/Resources

• Financial Aid Verification Policy

- [Financial Aid Record Retention Policy](#)

- [Return of Title IV Funds Policy](#)

- [HOPE Scholarship Program Reconciliation Policy](#)

Definitions

These definitions apply to these terms as they are used in this policy:

- **Award Letter**: An "Award Letter" is an official document issued by an institution's financial aid office that lists all of the financial aid awarded to the student. This letter provides details on the student's financial need and the breakdown of his or her financial aid package according to amount, source and type of aid. The award letter will include the terms and conditions for the financial aid and information about the cost of attendance. A student can view his or her award letter on COAST.

- **Bank Account**: For purposes of this policy, the term "bank account" refers to an account insured by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation or the National Credit Union Share Insurance Fund. This account may be a checking, savings or similar account that underlies a stored-value card or other transaction device.

- **Need-Based**: Financial aid that is "need-based" is dependent upon a student's financial situation. Most government sources of financial aid are need-based.

- **Packaging**: The term "packaging" refers to the process of assembling a financial aid package.

- **Verification**: The term "verification" refers to a review process in which the Financial Aid Office determines the accuracy of the information provided on the student's financial aid application.

Overview

The principle of equal educational opportunity, as well as access to and choice among institutions, provides the foundation for financial aid programs and awarding practices at the College of Coastal Georgia. This foundation and the College's efforts to provide educational opportunities for students to respond to the multicultural and diverse needs of society, by ensuring equal access to its educational programs and services, direct the efforts of the Financial Aid Office. Programs and services, such as financial counseling, are designed to be accessible to all students. Therefore, through the administration of federal Title IV, state grants, and institutional aid programs, the

Financial Aid Office strives to ensure that no student who is eligible should be denied a post-secondary education. To this end, the Financial Aid Office's goal is to provide expedient and efficient financial aid delivery systems to College students, embracing its role as a full partner in support of the College's commitment to excellence in learning.

I.   **Applying for Financial Aid**

To apply for federal, state, and College financial aid, a student must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This form can be completed online at http://www.fafsa.ed.gov.

a.   College Code. When filing the FAFSA, a student should list the College's institution code of 001558. This will ensure the College receives the results of the FAFSA and processes a student's financial aid according to eligibility.

b.   Deadline. The following deadlines have been established for financial aid processing at the College:

- The College must receive the results of a student's FAFSA by our priority deadline of May 1st preceding each award year in order to ensure the request will be processed and packaged by the beginning of the fall academic term.

- If a student's results are received after May 1st, the application will be processed in accordance with the procedures outlined in this policy, but the College does not guarantee the results will be processed and packaged by the beginning of the fall academic term.

II.   **Application Processing**

As noted above, in order to determine eligibility for any federal financial aid program, students must file the FAFSA and have the results sent to the College. If the student lists the College as a institution choice on their FAFSA, then the student's Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) is transmitted to the College and loaded into the College database. For students who have been tentatively admitted or are currently attending the College, the data is used in the verification and correction processes.

a.   Receipt Prior to Admittance. When a student's ISIR is transmitted to the College, but the student has not yet applied for admission to the College, the Financial Aid Office will notify the Admissions Office, via electronic mail daily, that the ISIR has been received.

- Based upon this information, the Admissions Office will initiate contact with the prospective student to encourage and facilitate the submission of an application for admission. *No financial aid applications will be processed or verified for students who have not applied for admission to the College*.

- The Director of Admissions will ensure that a full listing of all applicants is submitted daily to the Director of Financial Aid to facilitate the processing of those students' financial aid applications.

b. <u>Receipt Following Admittance</u>. The Financial Aid Office receives the students ISIR through electronic transmission through the Central Processing System (CPS). Student eligibility is determined only through the CPS/U.S. Department of Education using the Federal Methodology Need Analysis Formula. The Financial Aid Office must have an official "expected family contribution" (EFC) before eligibility for any Federal funds can be determined. When the ISIR record is loaded into the College database, the Financial Aid Office checks for verification selection, C-Codes, rejects, loan requests, and proof of high school graduation and other required eligibility requirements.

c. <u>Determination of Financial Aid</u>. Once the ISIR is loaded with a valid EFC and academic progress for financial aid can be determined, the Financial Aid Office will package the student's financial aid. A first-time student is then sent one paper award letter with an enclosure that explains the rights and responsibilities of the student as they pertain to these awards. If a first-time student is not eligible for grants due to the EFC, he or she is sent a "No Aid" letter, suggesting that they apply for Stafford loans. If a returning student is not eligible due to not meeting the Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, a "No Progress" letter is sent.

III. **Verification**

Verification is a process that all colleges and universities receiving federal aid are required to complete. Students must complete verification in order to be eligible for need-based financial aid. The verification process is completed by collecting tax information and comparing it to the information reported on a student's FAFSA. This is not done to find fraudulent FAFSA applicants, but to find and correct common mistakes made by students and parents. When an error is found, the Financial Aid Office will make a correction to the student's FAFSA information. While additional information regarding the College's verification procedures can be found in the "Financial Aid Verification" policy, which is electronically available at http://www.ccga.edu/Current/CampusPolicies.asp?page=ps, it is important to note

again that *no financial aid applications will be processed or verified for students who have not applied for admission to the College*.

IV.   **Attendance Verification**

To ensure compliance with state and federal financial aid guidelines, financial aid refund checks will be available at the Business Office only after a student's attendance has been verified by his or her instructor(s) in at least six (6) credit hours. Second session classes are excluded, unless all of a student's classes are second session. If all of a student's classes are during the second session, those classes will have to be verified before his or her check will be available. If a student's total enrollment is less than six (6) credit hours, his or her attendance must be verified in all classes before a refund check will be distributed.

V.   **Awarding Financial Aid**

A student's financial need is determined by using the EFC, which is derived from the FAFSA. The EFC takes into account the number of people in the household size, the number of people in college, student income and student assets. When a student is dependent and required to include parent(s) information on the FAFSA, parent(s) income and assets are taken into consideration as well. Need-based aid consists of grants, scholarships, Federal Work Study, and subsidized Stafford Loans. The remainder of the student's budget may be covered by an unsubsidized Stafford Loan, a Parent PLUS Loan, or an alternative loan from a private lender. The maximum amount of aid a student can receive is determined by his or her "cost of education" budget.

VI.   **Award Notification**

Students approved for financial aid will be notified of their award package via an Award Letter. The Award Acceptance Form should be signed and returned to the Financial Aid Office within the timeframe specified on the Acceptance Form.

VII.   **Refunds**

The College will refund financial aid to students through the initiation of an electronic funds transfer to a bank account designated by the student or parent. All refunds will be made by crediting the student's account.

a.   Additional Financial Aid. When calculating financial aid, the Financial Aid Office takes into consideration tuition, fees, and other expenses. Once tuition and fees are paid, excess funds will be disbursed. These funds are then available for a student's other educational expenses.

b. Withdrawal Following Disbursement. If a student completely withdraws from all of his or her courses after the first day of classes, the College is required to perform a calculation called the "Return of Title IV Funds." This calculation will determine the amount of financial aid earned and, quite possibly, the amount of financial aid a student will be required to return or repay. If a student withdraws during the first 60% of the semester, his or her financial aid will be adjusted based on the calculation. The Business Office will review what charges a student is responsible for and what financial aid he or she is eligible to receive at the time of withdrawal. The student's aid may be reduced or canceled based on this process, and the student may owe a balance to the College.

VIII. **Recovery of Funds**

If, at any time, the College discovers that a student has been awarded, and the student's account credited with, more than the amount for which he or she is eligible under the Federal Pell Grant, ACG, National SMART Grant, or FSEOG, the College shall eliminate the overpayment in one of the following ways:

a. Adjustment. First, the College may eliminate the overpayment by adjusting subsequent financial aid payments in the award year in which the overpayment occurred.

b. Reimbursement. Second, the College may eliminate the overpayment by adjusting subsequent financial aid payments in the award year by reimbursing the appropriate program account by:

  • Requiring the applicant to return the overpayment to the College if the College cannot correct the overpayment; or

  • Making restitution from its own funds, by the earlier of the following dates, if the applicant does not return the overpayment: (a) sixty days after the applicant's last day of attendance; or (b) the last day of the award year in which the College disbursed Federal Pell Grant, ACG, National SMART Grant, or FSEOG funds to the applicant.

c. Stafford Loan Overpayments. If the College determines as a result of the verification process that an applicant received Stafford Loan proceeds for an award year in excess of the student's financial need for the loan, the College shall withhold and promptly return to the lender or escrow agent any disbursement not yet delivered to the student that exceeds the amount of assistance for which the student is eligible, taking into account other financial aid received by the student. However, instead of returning the entire undelivered

disbursement, the College may choose to return promptly to the lender only the portion of the disbursement for which the student is ineligible. In either case, the College shall provide the lender with a written statement describing the reason for the returned loan funds.

d.   <u>Direct Subsidized Loan Overpayments</u>. If the College determines as a result of the verification process that a student received Direct Subsidized Loan proceeds for an award year in excess of the student's need for the loan, the College shall reduce or cancel one or more subsequent disbursements to eliminate the amount in excess of the student's need.

e.   <u>Federal Pell Grant Underpayments</u>. If, at any time, it is discovered that a student has been awarded, and the student's account credited with, less than the amount for which he or she is eligible under the Federal Pell Grant, the student is considered to have received a Pell underpayment. If an underpayment is discovered, the student's account will be credited immediately.

IX.   **Satisfactory Academic Progress**

Federal law mandates that the College establish minimum standards of "satisfactory academic progress" (SAP) for students receiving financial aid. To receive financial aid at the College of Coastal Georgia, a student must maintain a satisfactory Grade Point Average (GPA) and be making satisfactory progress, as outlined below. These requirements apply to any grants, loans or scholarships that contain any federal or state funds.

At the end of every Spring Semester, the Financial Aid Office is required to monitor all financial aid recipients for SAP. This is a cumulative measure that counts all courses attempted at the College, in addition to any courses accepted as transfer work from another institution.

a.   <u>Grade Point Average</u>. Students must maintain an acceptable GPA based upon the number of hours attempted. Specifically:

Attempted Hours	GPA Required
0-29	1.5
30-50	1.7
50+	2.0

All classes (excluding the first 30 credit hours of Learning support classes) are included in the GPA calculation for financial aid purposes. Transfer work that is accepted for credit is also counted.

b. <u>Failure to Meet Grade Point Average</u>. The College may determine that a student is making satisfactory progress even though the student does not satisfy the requirements in paragraph (a), above, if the College determines that the student's failure to meet those requirements is based upon:

  • The death of a relative of the student;

  • An injury or illness of the student; or

  • Other special circumstances.

c. <u>Completion Percentage</u>. In addition to maintaining the GPA requirements outlined above, students must complete at least 67% of courses attempted. The system does not "round-up" completed hours. If a student attempts twelve (12) hours, but only completes eight (8), the completion rate is 66.6%. In such a case, the student would not be meeting the Satisfactory Academic Progress policy.

  Grades of W, IP, and F do not count as completions. The first thirty (30) Learning support classes are excluded in the completion ratio calculation for financial aid purposes. Additionally, students must complete their program of study in a reasonable time frame. The maximum time frame allowed for a student to complete his or her program of study is 150% of the total credit hours required for the program.

d. <u>Improved Progress</u>. If a student is not making satisfactory progress at the end of the second year, but at the end of a subsequent grading period comes into compliance with the College's requirements for graduation, the College may consider the student as making satisfactory progress beginning with the next grading period.

e. <u>Mandatory Review</u>. At a minimum, the College must review a student's academic progress at the end of each year.

f. <u>Appeal Process</u>. If there are extenuating circumstances that prevented a student from meeting the SAP policy, a written financial aid appeal can be submitted to the Financial Aid Office. Appeals can be submitted in person or by mail. Students should submit their written appeals to the Financial Aid Office and must address both of the following items:

  • The reason(s) why the student has not met the minimum academic requirements to receive Financial Aid.

- The step(s) the student is taking to obtain the minimum requirements to receive Financial Aid.

All appeals are reviewed at the end of semester after final grades are posted. It can take up to seven (7) business days after grades are posted for an appeal to be reviewed. During peak times, such as registration and the first week of classes, the process can take longer than the normal seven (7) days. Once the review is complete, the student will be notified by mail.

X. **Academic Standing and Financial Aid**

A student placed on either academic warning or academic probation remains eligible for financial aid. However, a student on academic suspension is not eligible for financial aid.

XI. **HOPE Eligibility Verification**

Each year, the Georgia State Finance Commission forwards to the College a list of those HOPE eligible students who have listed the institution as a potential destination. The Director of Financial Aid shall ensure this list is reviewed at the beginning of each academic semester to confirm that eligible students have received their HOPE awards and have not been erroneously dropped from classes for non-payment of tuition.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities each party has in connection with this policy on financial aid processing are:

Party	Responsibility
Financial Aid Office	Ensure compliance with this policy.
Business Office	Ensure compliance with this policy.
Admissions Office	Ensure compliance with this policy.
Athletic Department	Ensure compliance with this policy.
Advancement Office	Ensure compliance with this policy.

Forms

None

Appendices

None