



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.

111 Executive Center Dr
Suite 242
Columbia, SC 29210
(803) 896-1120
info@sctuitiongrants.org

Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

Proposed Changes to Annual Eligibility Deadline and Spring-only Grant Appeal Requests

Eligibility Deadline Policy:

Per the November 15 Eligibility Deadline Policy: "No increases in existing awards, no additions of new awards, no appeals of eligibility, and no corrections of error to eligibility increasing or reinstating an award are allowed after November 15. Colleges must provide any corrections to eligibility or information that would change the student from ineligible to eligible, **no later than November 15**. If, on November 15, a student is in *myTG* as ineligible or eligible for less than a full award, and a determination is made by the college after November 15 that this is an error, this Commission-approved policy prohibits a correction of the error. However, a reduction in a South Carolina Tuition Grant for any reason must be made at any time during the award year, including after November 15."

This Commission-approved policy was established effective with the 1998-1999 Award Year to ensure all eligible students' awards were made and disbursed in advance of the mid-year budget review, to determine if enough funds would be available to fully fund the spring portion of grants, or if adjustments would be necessary based on available funding levels. Prior to the establishment of this policy, there was a case when an institution submitted a check request well into the spring semester for students who were eligible in the fall, requiring a reduction of all students' spring grants.

Several colleges currently offer online degree programs, which are approved through the Commission's Non-Traditional Program Calendar Policy, with enrollment patterns of block-module terms, many colleges' fall Non-Traditional certifications are not due until after the November 15 eligibility deadline; because of this, there are already certain exceptions to the November 15 Eligibility Deadline that extend the deadline to mid-December for these populations of students.

While the intent of the deadline is considered necessary, it is the Staff's recommendation that the November 15 Eligibility Deadline be extended by an additional two months, to **January 15**, annually, to provide students and financial aid staff additional time to ensure fall-semester eligibility. This extension would also hopefully provide all colleges with additional time at the end of the Fall semester to identify and correct any possible errors which would prevent a student's eligibility for the entire academic year. It should be noted, however, that Staff are not recommending adjustments to the 25-business day deadline for completing the certification process once made available. Colleges should still work to confirm and request funding as quickly as possible to avoid delaying students' grants disbursement.

Should the Commission wish to make this change, replacing reference to November 15th with January 15th, a vote would be required.

Spring-only Appeal Request Allowances:

In general, students who fail to enroll full-time during the Fall semester forfeit their South Carolina Tuition Grant eligibility for the entire academic year. In the case of an extenuating circumstance, a student may submit an appeal by the Eligibility Deadline, requesting consideration of a Spring-only

grant. A student must have been otherwise eligible (e.g., met the application deadline, meeting SAP, have demonstrated financial need, etc.) in the fall in order for the request to be considered. Additionally, Commission policy also permits a student who withdrew during the fall semester, receiving a 100% refund, to submit an appeal for a spring-only grant by the eligibility deadline.

In an effort to continue expanding the reach of the Program to more students, Commission Staff recommend discussing the availability of allowing additional spring-only appeals to be accepted from the financial aid office on a student's behalf through February 15th for specific cases only. Such recommendation would be to add the following verbiage to the existing Spring-only Appeal policy:

A student who is beginning their initial enrollment at the college effective with the Spring semester, either as a first-time freshman or as a transfer student from a non-participating college or university, may have the college submit an appeal on their behalf, for consideration of a Spring-only grant no later than **February 15**. The college must provide the appropriate documentation showing that the student was not enrolled during the fall semester at an eligible participating college or university, as these students would either have the ability to potentially qualify as a mid-year transfer or, in the case of not receiving Tuition Grants during the fall, have the opportunity to submit a Spring-only Appeal Request by the Eligibility Deadline. The college must ensure all eligibility requirements are satisfied (e.g., Signed Affidavit on-file, Verification completed, etc.) prior to submitting this type of request to the Commission.

Should the Commission wish to make this change, adding additional allowances for school-initiated spring-only appeal requests, a vote would be required.