

**Two-Year  
Occupational  
Grant  
Pilot  
Program**

**2017-2018**



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## **I. Introduction**

This manual is written for colleges participating in the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program and is subject to all subsequent changes in Minnesota state laws and regulations governing the program.

The Agency will provide each college with an opportunity to respond to proposed changes to any program rules and regulations. Within 10 days following the adoption of new or modified program rules or regulations, the Agency will develop and distribute updated written information to colleges that will later be included in this manual.

This chapter of the manual is updated on an annual basis. Colleges are required to read all email and written correspondence from the Agency to keep informed of current changes during the interim. According to the Institutional Participation Agreement signed by colleges participating in state financial aid programs, policy changes announced during the interim have the full force and effect of the Financial Aid Manual.

## **II. Program Objectives**

The objective of the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program is to provide free tuition and general fees, along with mentoring services, to eligible students so they may complete qualifying occupational programs that will lead to employment in high-demand fields in Minnesota.

## **III. Program Overview**

The MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program is a two-year pilot program that will provide free tuition and general fees, along with required mentoring services, to recent high school graduates and ABE/GED completers with family incomes of \$90,000 or less who are enrolled in qualifying occupational programs leading to employment in high-demand fields in Minnesota. The pilot program covers the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years, including summer terms.

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The grant, which is available only to students attending MnSCU two-year colleges, will cover any remaining portion of program tuition and general fees not covered by the student’s Federal Pell Grant and Minnesota State Grant.

The following formula is used to calculate the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant:

- Program tuition and mandatory general fees for semester
- Federal Pell Grant (if actually received by the student)
- Minnesota State Grant (if actually received by the student)
- = MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant (minimum award \$1)

The Agency is responsible for providing funding allocations to colleges, issuing program guidance, selecting and monitoring the mentoring contractor, collecting online participation agreements from student grant recipients and conducting an evaluation of the effectiveness of the pilot program. MnSCU two-year colleges are responsible for screening and ranking applicants, calculating awards, award notification, disbursement, award adjustments and refunds at the campus level. Colleges (or the MnSCU central office on their behalf) are also responsible for electronically reporting data to the Agency for mentoring and program evaluation purposes.

## **IV. Application Process**

### **A. Original Application**

Students apply for the Occupational Grant by completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at: [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov). Undocumented students who are not citizens or eligible non-citizens should apply using the MN Dream Act state financial aid application at: [www.ohe.state.mn.us/MNDreamAct](http://www.ohe.state.mn.us/MNDreamAct).

Each college will rank FAFSA and MN Dream Act applicants with finalized applications attending that college by original application submission date.



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## **B. Correcting Applications**

### **1. Correction Methods**

Once a FAFSA or MN Dream Act application is processed, there are several methods a student or college can use to make corrections:

- the student can make corrections on the paper SAR and resubmit the SAR to the FAFSA processor;
- the student can make corrections to the FAFSA at: [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov);
- the college can electronically submit corrections to the FAFSA processor; or
- the Agency can make corrections to the student's MN Dream Act application.

### **2. Use of Professional Judgment**

The Agency allows data elements on the student's application to be adjusted based on the financial aid administrator or the Agency exercising professional judgment, as outlined in federal aid regulations and Minnesota Statutes 136A.1312. Further guidance is provided in the Common Definitions chapter of the OHE Financial Aid Manual.

The Agency does not have authorization to perform a professional judgment to waive grant eligibility requirements.

### **3. Institutional Responsibility for Correcting Applications**

Colleges are responsible for performing verification (if selected) and resolving all conflicting information and C codes on the student's ISIR record. The Agency performs these functions for MN Dream Act applicants. Further guidance is provided in the State Grant chapter of the OHE Financial Aid Manual and the 'Federal Verification, Conflicting Information and C Codes' section of this chapter.

## **C. Application and Correction Deadlines**

### **1. Original Application Deadlines**

The pilot program law does not contain an application deadline. However, the college must set a date by which applications must be submitted and finalized in order to be include in the college's initial ranking of finalized applications by original application

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submission date. ‘Finalized’ means that all conflicting data and C codes have been resolved and verification has been performed, if selected.

For program evaluation purposes, students must receive the Occupational Grant and start their occupational program during the fall term of the 2016-2017 academic year in order to be included in the pilot program cohort. Colleges cannot award any new recipients after the date financial aid is applied to student accounts for spring term 2017. Thus, applications must be submitted and finalized prior to that time.

If the student’s original application was submitted under an incorrect Social Security number and the student submits another original application under the correct Social Security number, the application receipt date on the original application will be used when ranking applicants.

**2. Correction Deadlines**

Corrections to applications must be processed prior to the college closing out its Occupational Grant activity for the aid year. However, to be included in the college’s initial ranking of applicants for awarding purposes, the student’s application must be submitted and finalized by the ranking date selected by the college. Corrections made after that date may result in revised awards for recipients, but no new recipients may be awarded after the date financial aid is applied to student accounts for spring term 2017.

**D. Ranking of Applicants**

**1. Initial Ranking**

The college must pick a date by which it will perform its initial ranking of applicants for awarding purposes for each year of the pilot program. The ranking must be based on the original FAFSA or MN Dream Act submission date. Only finalized applications can be included in the ranking. ‘Finalized’ means that all conflicting information and Codes have been resolved and verification has been performed, if selected.

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## 2. **Waiting List**

If there are insufficient funds to award all applicants included in the initial ranking, those not awarded must be placed on a waiting list. The waiting list shall be ranked in order of the original application submission date for finalized applications. Those with applications not yet finalized shall not be placed on the waiting list until their applications have been finalized. If additional funds become available, the college shall award finalized applicants on the waiting list in order of the original application submission date.

### a. **Priority Waiting List for Award Adjustments**

Prior to awarding new applicants on the waiting list, any unused program funds must first be used to fund any award adjustments (increases) for current grant recipients at the college, which includes recipients who transferred (i.e., did not withdraw) to a new similar (i.e., in same two-digit CIP code category) qualifying occupational program at the same college. If there are insufficient funds to fund all award adjustments, recipients should be ranked by their original application submission date. This will necessitate the need for two waiting lists: a priority waiting list for recipients awaiting award increases or transferring to a similar occupational program at the same college and a standard waiting list for applicants not yet awarded, including transfer students from a similar occupational program at a different college.

### b. **Effects of Withdrawal on Waiting List**

At the college's discretion, a grant recipient who withdrew from a qualifying occupational program during fall term 2016 and enrolled in a similar qualifying occupational program for spring term 2017 at the same college, may be awarded for the new occupational program if the college determines the student can complete the program or earn 30 semester credits during the 2016-2017 academic year, including summer term 2017. If there are insufficient funds to award the student for the new program, the student can be placed on the college's priority

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waiting list. Awarding must take place prior to the date aid is applied for spring term 2017.

**c. Holding Funds in Reserve**

A college may hold up to 20 percent of its original annual allocation for the academic year in reserve in order to cover any adjustments to grant awards and ensure sufficient funding is available to cover awards for the summer 2017 term.

**V. Eligibility Requirements**

**A. Postsecondary Institutions**

The pilot program is limited to MnSCU two-year colleges offering qualifying occupational programs.

**B. Qualifying Occupational Programs**

Qualifying occupational programs are certificate, diploma, A.S. or A.A.S degrees covered under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act. There is no minimum program length for the Occupational Grant program.

General program areas include:

- agriculture, food and natural resources;
- business management and administration;
- human services;
- engineering, manufacturing and technology;
- arts, communications, and information systems; and
- health science technology.

Programs must prepare students for employment in high-demand fields, as designated by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED).

Classification of Instructions Programs (CIP) codes are used to categorize fields of study. Each program has a 6-digit CIP code. The first two digits are the broad field. The third and

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fourth digits further define the broad category and the last two digits further define the third and fourth digits.

For example, the CIP code for Pharmacy Technician is 51.0805:

- 51 = Health Professions and Related Programs
- 51.08 = Allied Health and Medical Assisting Programs
- 51.0805 = Pharmacy Technician/Assistant

Only occupational programs with certain CIP codes have been designated as high-demand fields by DEED.

A list of all qualifying occupational programs in high-demand fields is sent to the Agency by the MnSCU central office. The list is posted on the Agency's [website](#) and available for distribution to colleges and students.

The Agency refines the public list viewed by students to exclude programs included on the original list that are not scheduled to be completed within two academic years or those that cannot be started fall term 2016 due to prerequisites. The college has authority to award grants to students in such excluded programs if it identifies students who can be admitted into and start the program fall term 2016 and/or complete the program within two academic years (e.g., students who earned college credits while in high school.)

Colleges wishing to add new or remove obsolete programs from the list should contact the Agency. New programs may not be added unless they meet the definition of qualifying program and start during fall term 2016.

### **C. Student Eligibility**

#### **1. Student Eligibility Requirements for Initial Year**

Students must meet the following eligibility requirements to participate in the pilot program during the first academic year:

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- apply using the 2016-2017 FAFSA (or 2016-2017 MN Dream Act state financial aid application for undocumented students);
- be a Minnesota resident as defined in the Common Definitions chapter of this manual;
- have a family income of \$90,000 or less as reported on the FAFSA or MN Dream Act application:
  - Parental adjusted gross income (or wages, if non-filers) is used for dependent applicants.
  - Student (and spouse's) adjusted gross income (or wages, if non-filers) is used for independent applicants (based on definition of Independent Student in the Common Definitions chapter of the OHE Financial Aid Manual);
- graduated from a Minnesota high school (or complete an Adult Basic Education (ABE) program or GED test as a Minnesota resident) during the 2015-2016 academic year (any time during the period of July 1, 2015 to the beginning of fall term 2016).
  - Colleges may determine the student's high school graduation or GED status based on information collected on the FAFSA, MN Dream Act or admissions applications or other forms used by the college. Colleges are not required to obtain a copy of the student's high school transcript, diploma or GED unless the college is presented with conflicting information or has reason to question the validity of the high school credential.
  - Students who graduated from high school during an earlier school year and completed an approved 12 or 24-month AmeriCorps program immediately after high school graduation and ending prior to fall term 2016 are also eligible;
- be enrolled (admitted into and starting) for at least one credit in a qualifying occupational program during fall term 2016;
  - Students taking only developmental or prerequisite courses during fall term 2016 who are not yet admitted to the occupational program are not eligible.
  - Continued enrollment in a qualifying occupational program must be verified by the college prior to disbursement of the grant each term.
- have fall term 2016 tuition and general fees not fully covered by the Federal Pell Grant and State Grant;

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- meet satisfactory academic progress requirements as defined for state financial aid programs; and
- complete the online student participation agreement (Appendix 1) which includes:
  - agreeing to participate in free mentoring services; and
  - granting permission for the Agency, college, MnSCU and mentoring contractor to share student data related to the pilot program.

## **2. Student Eligibility Requirements for Grant Renewal**

Students must meet the following eligibility requirements to receive an Occupational Grant during the second academic year:

- apply using the 2017-2018 FAFSA (or 2017-2018 MN Dream Act state financial aid application for undocumented students);
- earned at least 30 program credits (does not include credits that will not be applied to the student's credential) by the end of the first academic year, including summer term and is still enrolled in a qualifying educational program;
  - Exception: programs with restrictions that prevent students from obtaining at least 30 program credits. Colleges must have programs listed with the Agency.
  - College credits taken prior to fall term 2016 (e.g., PSEO credits, transfer credits) that can be applied to the student's credential can be included in the 30 program credits required for renewal of the grant.
- college certifies the student can complete the program by the end of the second academic year, including summer term;
- participated in free mentoring services during the first academic year as determined by the Agency and mentoring contractor; and
- making satisfactory academic progress (SAP) as defined for state financial aid programs except that the student's cumulative GPA must be at least 2.5 at the end of the first academic year and at the end of each term thereafter.
  - A student eligible for a renewal award can continue to receive the award during an automatic warning period or appeal-based probationary period during the 2017-2018 academic year. (See definition of 'Satisfactory Academic Progress' in the Common Definitions chapter of this manual.)

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### **3. Liability for Monitoring Eligibility Requirements**

Participating colleges are responsible for selecting and screening pilot program applicants to ensure they meet all of the student eligibility requirements. This includes verifying that the student continues to be enrolled in a qualifying occupational program when disbursing funds each term.

The Agency's mentoring contractor will inform the Agency and college which recipients are participating in the required mentoring services for purposes of determining whether the student will meet the conditions for receiving a renewal award during the second year of the pilot program.

If the college has documentation that the student did not meet an eligibility requirement at the time of disbursement, or failed to request such documentation, the college will be responsible for reimbursing the Occupational Grant program from its own funds if it cannot collect the overpayment from the student.

### **D. Required Mentoring Services**

In order to participate in the pilot program, students are required to take part in free mentoring services provided by the Agency's mentoring contractor, Inside Track. Such services include, but are not limited to:

- communicating frequently and consistently throughout pilot program participation;
- developing a personalized student success plan that includes concrete steps towards program completion and job placement and identifies and makes contingency plans for potential obstacles to program completion;
- connecting students to on-campus resources and personal development opportunities; and
- financial planning.

Mentoring services provided to students in the pilot program cohort will no longer be provided after the student completes the occupational program or is no longer enrolled at the college, in which case, the financial aid administrator should log into the online student



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participation agreement database and indicate on the student’s record that mentoring should be terminated.

Staff at participating colleges are encouraged to cooperate with the Agency’s mentoring contractor in order to facilitate successful program completion by student participants.

Per the online participation agreement signed by student participants, the Agency, mentoring contractor and college are granted permission to share student data associated with the pilot program.

## **VI. Award Process and Calculation**

### **A. Occupational Grant Award Calculation**

The Occupational Grant is a “last dollar in” grant, such that program tuition and general fees for recipients can be covered by a combination of Federal Pell Grant, Minnesota State Grant and the Occupational Grant. The minimum award for a semester is one dollar.

<p>Program tuition and mandatory general fees for semester</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Federal Pell Grant (if actually received by the student)</li> <li>- <u>Minnesota State Grant (if actually received by the student)</u></li> <li>= MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant (minimum award \$1)</li> </ul>
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#### **1. Program Tuition and Mandatory General Fees**

The college should use each student’s actual program tuition charges, which may include differential program tuition rates at some colleges. Per the pilot program law, general fees are those mandatory general fees used for the State Grant program and do not include program or course-specific fees or the purchase of books and supplies.

If the student receives a waiver of tuition and fees from the college, the amount of tuition and fees waived cannot be used in the award calculation for the Occupational Grant.

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Unlike the State Grant program, tuition and general fees are not limited to 15 credits per term in cases where the student enrolls for more than 15 credits.

The tuition and fees used should be based on those charged as of the date of disbursement of the Occupational Grant. If tuition and fees were adjusted prior to the disbursement of the Occupational Grant, the amount actually charged to the student should be used in the award calculation. If tuition and fees were adjusted after the disbursement of the grant, the award may need to be adjusted (see 'Adjustments to Occupational Grant Awards' section in this chapter).

**a. Attending Multiple Colleges for Same Term**

In cases where the student is attending multiple colleges during the same term, the MnSCU two-year college at which the student is pursuing the credential (home college) shall award the Occupational Grant. The tuition and fees used in the award calculation shall be the amount of tuition and general fees that would be charged at the home college for the *combined* credits from both colleges provided the course work taken at the other college is required for the student's occupational program at the home college. It will be the student's responsibility to use a portion of the award at the home college to pay tuition and fees at the other college the student is attending.

**2. Subtraction of Federal Pell Grant**

The Federal Pell Grant used in the calculation of the Occupational Grant is based on the award amount shown for the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and enrollment level on the Federal Pell Grant disbursement schedule for the aid year. The Federal Pell Grant is only subtracted if it is *actually disbursed to the student*.

For example, an undocumented student may financially qualify for the Federal Pell Grant based on the student's EFC, but cannot receive the Pell Grant because the student does not meet the program eligibility requirement for U.S. citizenship or eligible

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non-citizen status. In such cases, the Pell Grant is not subtracted in the Occupational Grant award calculation.

The same would apply to students who cannot receive a Federal Pell Grant because the program in which they are enrolled does not meet minimum program length requirements for the Federal Pell Grant program. Additionally, students who do not have enough remaining Pell Grant eligibility to cover the Pell Grant award for summer term will only have the amount of Pell Grant funds actually disbursed to the student for summer term subtracted in the Occupational Grant award calculation.

In cases where the student's Federal Pell Grant amount is subsequently adjusted due to changes in enrollment level or EFC, the Occupational Grant may need to be recalculated (see 'Adjustments to Occupational Grant Awards' section in this chapter).

### **3. Subtraction of Minnesota State Grant**

The State Grant used in the calculation of the Occupational Grant is based on the State Grant Shared Responsibility award calculation (see Appendix 8 in State Grant chapter of this manual). The State Grant is only subtracted if it is *actually disbursed to the student*.

For example, the student may financially qualify for a State Grant, but cannot receive it because the student missed the State Grant application deadline or the student's occupational program does not meet the minimum program length requirements used for the State Grant program. In such cases, the State Grant is not subtracted in the Occupational Grant award calculation.

In cases where the student's State Grant amount is subsequently adjusted due to changes in enrollment level, need analysis results, degree type or award calculation budget, the Occupational Grant may need to be recalculated (see 'Adjustments to Occupational Grant Awards' section in this chapter).

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## **B. Awarding Period**

### **1. Definition of Academic Year**

For purposes of this program, academic year means fall and spring semesters along with a trailing summer semester.

### **2. Payment Periods**

The Agency designates that colleges may have only two or three payment periods during the academic year. The college specifies on the State Grant budget questionnaire it completes each year whether it will disburse aid on a semester (two periods) or quarterly (three periods) basis. The Occupational Grant is calculated and disbursed separately for each term within the academic year, including summer term.

### **3. Period of Award / Awarding Deadline**

Students can be awarded for up to three semesters per academic year. The decision to award the student for the summer semester is not optional; if the student is enrolled and eligible for an award during the summer term, the student must be awarded.

Unlike the State Grant program, annual credits awarded are not limited to 45 semester credits per academic year.

In order to provide a comparable amount of mentoring services and financial assistance for all pilot program participants, colleges may not award any new recipients after the date financial aid funds are applied to student accounts for spring semester 2017. In order to be awarded for the 2016-2017 academic year, the student must be awarded an Occupational Grant for fall term 2016; awards cannot be limited to spring and summer terms. (See also the section on 'Late/Retroactive Disbursement' in this chapter.)

## **C. Awarding Multiple Occupational Program Credentials at Same College**

In general, a student can only be awarded an Occupational Grant for one qualifying program credential (certificate, diploma or A.S. or A.A.S degree) during the pilot period, except:

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- Multiple certificate programs can be funded if they are in the same subject area (same two-digit CIP code) and offered sequentially.
- A certificate program may be taken in conjunction with a qualifying two-year degree program, if the certificate program is required for the degree program or for licensure in the occupational field (e.g., law enforcement skills certificate taken after two-year law enforcement degree, certified nursing assistant certificate taken for a nursing degree).
- A student may transfer from a qualifying occupational program and enroll in and be awarded for a similar qualifying occupational program (same two-digit CIP code) at the same college. If the new program has a longer program length than the original program, and there are insufficient funds to cover the award for the new program, the student should be placed on the priority waiting list. The college also has the option of awarding students who withdrew from a qualifying occupational program at the college and enrolled in a similar qualifying occupational program at the college, if the student can either complete the program or earn 30 program credits during the 2016-2017 academic year, but is not required to do so.

**1. Simultaneous Enrollment in Qualifying and Non-Qualifying Program**

Students who are enrolled in both a qualifying and non-qualifying program at the college can be awarded for the qualifying occupational program. Such students may continue to be awarded each term as long as they are enrolled in a qualifying occupational program for the term, regardless of their particular course work that term. In these cases, there is no requirement for the college to award only for the credits applied to the qualifying program, but it may opt to do so. However, to qualify for a renewal award during the 2017-2018 academic year, the student must be completed 30 qualifying program credits during the 2016-2017 academic year.

**D. Awarding Transfer Students**

A recipient may transfer from a qualifying occupational program at one college to the same or similar (same two-digit CIP code) qualifying occupational program at another college. The new college may award the student provided:

- the student did not withdraw during a term at the first college; and

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- the awarding takes place before the awarding deadline (date financial aid is applied for the spring term of the 2016-2017 academic year) at the new college; and
- the student will be able to complete the program at the new college, or earn 30 program credits during the 2016-2017 academic year if enrolled in a credential requiring more than 30 credits.

If the new college has insufficient funds to award all eligible applicants, the transfer student should be placed on the standard waiting list and ranked by original FAFSA or MN Dream Act application submission date along with all other finalized applicants on the waiting list who have not yet been awarded.

## **E. Notification of Awards**

### **1. Award Notice**

Colleges must include the Occupational Grant in the student's financial aid award notice. The initial award may be based on assumed full-time enrollment level or the student's registered enrollment level for the academic year and later adjusted after the drop/add period of each term. If there are changes to the student's enrollment level, program, need analysis, etc., after the grant has been disbursed, the award may need to be adjusted. (See 'Adjustments to Occupational Grant Awards' section in this chapter for further detail.)

The college must inform recipients that the grant is available during the summer term if the summer term award is not included in the award notice.

#### **a. Early Award Notification**

Prior to generating standard financial aid notices to students, colleges may provide early notification to students who meet program eligibility requirements, show financial need for an Occupational Grant award and were included in the college's ranking of applicants. Such notices should inform the applicant that tuition and general fees will likely be covered by a combination of Federal Pell Grant, State Grant and the Occupational Grant. Notices should also inform the student that the

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amount of Occupational Grant may change each term depending on the student's program, enrollment level, Federal Pell Grant and State Grant.

## **2. Online Student Participation Agreement**

The college's award notice and/or early award notification letter should direct Occupational Grant awardees to the Agency's online student participation agreement (Appendix 1) for the program, in which the student agrees to participate in free mentoring services and grant permission for the Agency, college, MnSCU and mentoring contractor to share student data related to the pilot program. By affirmatively completing the online student participation agreement, the student can be considered to have accepted the award. If the agreement is not completed, the student is assumed to have declined the award.

The URL for the online student participation agreement is:

<https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/ssl/SG/MnSCUOccGrant/participation/1.cfm>

### **a. Deadline for Online Student Participation Agreement**

In order to ensure that all program funds can be awarded to students in a timely manner, a recipient must complete the Online Student Participation Agreement by August 1, 2016, or within 14 days of receiving notification of eligibility for an award, whichever is later. The deadline may be waived in cases where the college has sufficient funds to award all current applicants.

### **b. College Access and Edits to Online Student Participation Agreement**

Financial aid administrators may log into the SG web access screen and access online student participation agreements for their Occupational Grant recipients. After disbursing a student's fall term 2016 grant, the college should indicate the amount of funds disbursed in the 'Fall 2016 Award' field on the student's screen.

The college should set the 'Stop Mentoring' field to 'Yes' if:

- the student was not awarded for fall term 2016; or

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- the student was awarded but has completed or withdrawn from the occupational program and has not been awarded for an additional occupational program.

## **F. Awards for Summer Term**

The Occupational Grant is available during the summer term of the aid year. The college cannot require a separate summer term application beyond the FAFSA (or MN Dream Act application used for undocumented students) used to award for the fall and spring terms of the academic year.

### **1. Origination of Funding**

If a term or payment period does not overlap two aid years, it must be paid from the aid year in which it occurs.

Typically, when a crossover term overlaps two aid years (begins before and ends after July 1), funding may come from either aid year. However, this pilot program requires that the summer term be treated as the trailing summer term of the academic year (e.g., summer term 2017 is the last term of the 2016-2017 academic year).

### **2. Defining a Summer Term**

Definition of a term must be done uniformly for all recipients.

In order for two or more mini-sessions to be treated as one term, the college must define a student's enrollment status in terms of the number of credits for which the student is enrolled during all sessions. When multiple mini-sessions are combined to make one term, the term start date is considered the first day of the first session in the term even if the student does not attend the first session.

Example: The first summer session starts May 28 and ends June 29 (five weeks) and the second summer session starts July 1 and ends August 3 (five weeks). If these two 5-week sessions are combined into a 10-week term, the tuition and fees, Pell Grant and



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State Grant used in the award calculation for the 10-week term must be those associated with the credits for the entire 10-week period. The term start date would be May 28.

If the original award disbursed at the onset of the term is based on course work from which the student subsequently drops or withdraws, the Occupational Grant may need to be recalculated. (See 'Adjustments to Award Based on Changes in Enrollment Level.')

### **3. Determining Credits Needed for Enrollment Status**

Enrollment status for summer terms is derived in the same manner as for other terms. That is, based on the actual number of credits for which the student is enrolled. No adjustments are required for summer terms that may be shorter or longer than other terms in the academic year.

### **4. Determining Amount of Award**

The calculation of the Occupational Grant for the summer term is performed in the same manner as for other terms in the academic year. No proration or adjustments are required if the summer term is shorter or longer than the other terms in the academic year.

Many Federal Pell Grant recipients may see increases in their Occupational Grant awards for the summer term compared to other terms, all else being equal. This is because the award calculation only requires the subtraction of the Federal Pell Grant funds *actually disbursed* to the student for the term. Because Federal Pell Grant funding is limited to two full-time semesters per aid year, many students will have used up all or nearly all of their annual Pell Grant eligibility during the fall and spring terms and, thus, have less Pell Grant subtracted in the summer term Occupational Grant award calculation. [Note: The student may only be awarded for summer term 2017 if the student received an award during fall term 2016.]

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## **G. Adjustments to Occupational Grant Awards**

Occupational Grant awards are adjusted at the campus level. Colleges are responsible for informing students about adjustments made to the award.

### **1. Award Adjustment End Date**

The college must set an award adjustment end date after which Occupational Grant award adjustments and/or partial withdrawal refunds are no longer required for the term, *provided the student has begun attendance in all classes*. The award adjustment end date does not apply to award revisions based on a change in EFC or classes in which the student did not begin attendance.

The college may choose an award adjustment end date that coincides with the end of the drop/add period (the most commonly chosen) or any other date during the term, including the last day of the term if the college opts to perform award adjustments through the entire term. Whichever end date is selected for award adjustments, it must also be used for all applicable state financial aid programs. There is no requirement that the award adjustment end date used for state financial aid programs match the end date selected for adjusting Pell Grants. The college has the option of selecting different award adjustment end dates for different programs of study offered by the college.

### **2. Increased Award – Institutional Responsibilities**

If the Occupational Grant award should be increased, the college is responsible for revising (Pell or State Grant changes due to a change in EFC) or adjusting (tuition and fees, Pell or State Grants affected by change in enrollment level) the student's grant. When funds are available, the college should also notify the student of the new award amount and disburse additional funds to the student. Waiting list priority should be given to funding increases in awards for students already awarded as opposed to awarding new applicants. If the term has already started or been completed, policies for late or retroactive disbursement apply. (See 'Late/Retroactive Disbursement' section in this chapter.)

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Colleges are not required to revise the award based on a subsequent ISIR received after the student has stopped attending the college if the award for the term has already been disbursed and there was no conflicting information at the time of disbursement.

### **3. Decreased Award – Institutional Responsibilities and Liability**

If the Occupational Grant should be reduced or eliminated, the college is responsible for reducing the student’s award, notifying the student of the reduced award and making sure the overpayment is returned to its Occupational Grant fund for that aid year. Any unused program funds are then returned to the Agency no later than August 31 after the close of the academic year, unless the Agency requests unused funds earlier in the academic year.

If the college is unable to collect the overpayment from the student, it may turn over the student’s account receivable to the Agency as part of the balance due the Agency at the end of the year if it was not liable for repaying the overpayment from its own institutional funds. Otherwise, the college must repay the overpayment from its institutional funds.

Colleges are not required to revise the award based on a subsequent ISIR received after the student has stopped attending the college if the award for the term has already been disbursed and there was no conflicting information at the time of disbursement.

In general, a college is liable for repaying the overpayment from its own funds if:

- the college had documentation on campus at the time of disbursement showing the student did not meet a program eligibility requirement;
- after the student was paid, an item on the financial aid application was corrected that should have been resolved prior to disbursement through resolving conflicting information or the verification process, and the revision resulted in an overpayment;
- the college calculated an incorrect award amount.

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In collecting overpayments from students, colleges must:

- inform the student in writing of the overpayment;
- follow their applicable collection procedures to secure the return of the funds; and
- notify the Agency if the student refuses to acknowledge the overpayment or refuses to repay the funds. The Agency will utilize state income tax revenue recapture or may seek the assistance of the Attorney General of the State of Minnesota to recover the overpayment.

If the college is turning over a student's file to the Agency for billing at the end of the aid year, it must include all pertinent documentation such as the output document from the FAFSA (the Agency already maintains the output from the MN Dream Act application used by undocumented students), copies of billing letters, an explanation of how the overpayment occurred, copies of cashed checks or student account transactions and all other supporting documentation.

#### **4. Adjustments to Award Based on Change in Enrollment Level**

Appendix 3 of this chapter provides detailed instructions on Occupational Grant award (re)calculations and refunds based on changes in enrollment level taking place before or after disbursement of the award.

With some exceptions, Occupational Grant award (re)calculations must always be based on the student's tuition and fees, Federal Pell Grant and State Grant as of the date of disbursement.

The follow exceptions are cases where the Occupational Grant cannot be disbursed to the student:

- a full withdrawal for the term occurs prior to disbursement (including 'FW' grades or any similar grades signifying the student failed and stopped attending classes); and
- late disbursements for students who received all 'FN' grades or any similar grades signifying the student failed and did not attend any classes for the term.

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In cases where the student has begun attendance in all classes, Occupational Grant award adjustments and/or refunds for a partial withdrawal are not required unless the college adopts a written policy requiring award adjustments through a certain award adjustment end date (described earlier in this section) within the term. However, if a student withdraws from all classes, a total withdrawal refund calculation will be required regardless of the award adjustment end date. (See ‘Total Withdrawal’ in the ‘Calculating Refunds for Students Who Change Enrollment Level or Withdraw After Occupational Grant Disbursement’ section in this chapter.)

If a student has a change in enrollment level *after* beginning attendance in all classes but *before* the college’s award adjustment end date, the college may need to perform Occupational Grant award recalculations or partial withdrawal refunds for both increases and decreases in enrollment level if there were changes to the student’s tuition and fees, Pell Grant or State Grant awards. In other words, a college cannot opt to make adjustments only if they result in an increased Occupational Grant award.

If a college must calculate a refund for a partial withdrawal, the college must use the Office of Higher Education Refund Calculation Worksheet (Appendix 13c of State Grant manual) or spreadsheet (posted on [www.ohe.state.mn.us](http://www.ohe.state.mn.us)) and return the Occupational Grant’s proportional share of the institution’s refund of institutional charges (from line I (E) of the Office of Higher Education Refund Calculation Worksheet or spreadsheet). However, if the college does not offer a refund of institutional charges for a partial withdrawal, there is no requirement for the college to complete the refund calculation worksheet and return funds to the program if the college makes a notation to that effect in the student’s file for auditing purposes.

In the rare instance when a change to the student’s EFC affecting the student’s Pell or State Grant occurs after disbursement, and there is also a change to the student’s enrollment level requiring an adjustment to the award, the college must first recalculate the original award for the change in EFC and then make any required adjustments for a change in enrollment level.

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**5. Recalculation of Occupational Grant Award for Student Who Receives All Non-Passing Grades**

If the student receives non-passing grades for all classes taken during a term, the federal financial aid guidelines requiring colleges to document attendance in these cases also apply to the Occupational Grant program. (This includes classes with a grade of 'FN' or any comparable grade signifying the student has failed and never attended the class.)

If the college determines the student never attended a class or classes, but did attend other classes, the Occupational Grant award must be recalculated to reflect any changes to the student's tuition and fees, Pell Grant or State Grant due to any required award calculations for the classes the student did not attend. The Occupational Grant can be increased to "back fill" for reductions in Federal Pell Grant or State Grant for classes the student did not attend, as long as the student attended at least one class during the term.

If the college determines the student never attended *any* classes during the term, the Occupational Grant for that term must be fully refunded to the college's Occupational Grant account for that aid year.

**6. ISIR Transaction Received After Student Is No Longer Enrolled**

If a college receives a subsequent ISIR transaction for a student who is no longer enrolled at the college and is not intending to reenroll, there is no requirement to adjust the student's award if:

- the Occupational Grant for the period of enrollment has already been disbursed; and
- at the time of disbursement, there was no conflicting information.

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## **VII. Disbursement Process**

### **A. Disbursing Funds to Colleges**

#### **1. Original Allocation**

For the first year of the pilot program (2016-2017 academic year), each college will be notified of its annual allocation in the spring of 2016, and receive disbursements of its Occupational Grant funds in August (50 percent) and December (50 percent). Each college's allocation will be based on its proportional share of the annual program appropriation. The college's proportional share is the estimated grant amounts for its students enrolled in qualifying occupational programs during the previous fall term who met the program eligibility requirements and would have qualified for an award, divided by the total estimated grants for all such students at all participating colleges.

For the second year of the pilot program (2017-2018 academic year), The Agency will contact each college one month prior to semester start for an estimated allocation. The Agency will disburse allocations to colleges prior to the semester start date in August, December, and May based upon estimates submitted by colleges. Colleges must contact the Agency if additional funds are needed during the semester.

#### **a. Holding Funds in Reserve**

A college may hold up to 20 percent of its original allocation for the 2016-2017 academic year in reserve in order to cover any adjustments to grant awards and ensure there is sufficient funding to cover awards for the summer 2017 term. The funds may be held in reserve until the date financial aid is applied for summer semester 2017.

#### **2. Reallocation of Funds**

During fall term 2016, the Agency will contact colleges to determine if there are any excess funds that can be returned to the Agency for reallocation to other colleges requesting additional funds. Colleges will also need to report expenditures to date and number of applicants on the waiting list. Any unused funds will be reallocated to colleges based on factors such as each college's proportional share of the total funds

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available for reallocation and the number of students on the waiting list. Colleges may only award new recipients until the date financial aid is applied to student accounts for spring term 2017. New recipients must have been admitted into and started their qualifying occupational program during fall term 2016.

## **B. Disbursing Funds to Students**

The Occupational Grant award must be based on the student's tuition and fees, Pell Grant and State Grant as of the date of disbursement. There are certain exceptions to this rule when disbursement is delayed and the college determines the student has withdrawn from college or not attended any classes prior to disbursement (see Appendix 3 for detailed information).

### **1. When Colleges May Disburse Funds**

A college may not make an Occupational Grant payment to a student for a term until the student has registered for classes. Colleges are discouraged from delaying disbursements until the college's award adjustment end date to avoid award adjustments.

Documentation must exist regarding the date of disbursement of the Occupational Grant payment. The disbursement date is the date that the Agency requires the college to determine the student's tuition and fees, Pell Grant or State Grant prior to determining the amount of Occupational Grant funds to be disbursed to the student. The Agency and/or the college's independent public auditors will use the disbursement date to verify the correct award amounts for recipients.

The disbursement date of all Occupational Grant payments made prior to the start of the enrollment period will be the first day of required class attendance.

The disbursement date of all Occupational Grant payments disbursed to a student after the start of the enrollment period will be:

- for grant payments posted to a student account, the date the funds are posted to the student's account;



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- for grant payments that are mailed to the student or transferred by EFT, the date of the check or EFT transaction unless the college elects to use the previous day as the disbursement date for all students paid using this method; or
- for grant payments that are disbursed directly to the student via check, the date the student picks up the check.

## **2. Late/Retroactive Disbursement**

Students must be awarded prior to the date financial aid funds are applied to student accounts for spring term 2017. In order to be awarded for the 2016-2017 academic year, the student must be awarded an Occupational Grant for fall term 2016; awards cannot be limited to spring and summer terms.

In general, the Occupational Grant disbursed to a student must be based on the student's tuition and fees, Pell Grant and State Grant as of the date of disbursement. However, there are exceptions to this rule when disbursement is delayed and the college determines a student has withdrawn from college or not attended any classes for the term prior to disbursement. (See Appendix 3 for detailed instructions.)

## **3. Method of Disbursement to Students**

Each college must disburse Occupational Grant funds by applying them to the student's account. The college must document the date of disbursement and the amount of Occupational Grant funds credited to the student's account.

## **4. Payment of Unpaid Institutional Charges**

At the time of disbursement, a college may require a student to pay all institutional charges currently due to the college. Minnesota financial aid recipients cannot have stricter payment requirements than students who do not receive financial aid.

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### **C. Institutional Responsibilities Prior to Disbursement**

#### **1. Notification of Students**

Colleges are responsible for informing students of Occupational Grant disbursement schedules. Notification may include a letter to the student or announcement of disbursement dates.

#### **2. Certification and Monitoring of Student Eligibility**

Prior to disbursement, a college is responsible for certifying that a student meets the program eligibility requirements outlined in the 'Student Eligibility' section of this chapter.

#### **3. Federal Verification, Conflicting Information and C Codes**

Colleges should refer to the federal Application and Verification Guide for the aid year in question for detailed instructions. The verification guide and information about resolving conflicting information, C codes and unusual enrollment history flags are available at [www.ifap.ed.gov](http://www.ifap.ed.gov).

In instances where verification selection, conflicting information, C codes and unusual enrollment history flags take place *after* the Occupational Grant was disbursed, all future disbursements must be held until the college resolves the issues. If corrections result in a reduced award, the college must bill the student for the overpayment and return the overpayment to its Occupational Grant account. If a student fails to produce the required documentation, the student should be billed for the entire amount previously disbursed.

A college is not required to adjust the award based on a subsequent ISIR transaction received after the student stopped enrollment at the college provided the award has already been disbursed and there was no conflicting information at the time of disbursement.

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#### **4. Adjusting Payments Due to Revised Award**

Colleges are responsible for making any required adjustments to or refunds of a student's Occupational Grant payment if there has been a change in the student's federal need analysis results, tuition and fee charges, Pell Grant or State Grant (see Appendix 3 for detailed instructions). If a college receives a revised ISIR after the deadline by which it must make Pell Grant adjustments and the ISIR would result in a decreased Pell Grant, the college cannot adjust the student's State and Occupational Grants if it did not decrease the student's Pell Grant.

#### **5. Delaying Payments for Leaves of Absence**

A college cannot disburse Occupational Grant funds to a student who is on a leave of absence. (See definition in 'Common Definitions' chapter.) The college must wait for the student to return to college in order to disburse funds to the student. If there are changes to the student's tuition and fee charges, Pell Grant or State Grant for the term prior to the disbursement of the Occupational Grant, the Occupational Grant award must reflect those changes.

### **VIII. Program Cohort and Reporting Requirements**

#### **A. Students Included in Pilot Program Cohort**

Students are included in the pilot program cohort if they receive an Occupational Grant award disbursement during fall semester 2016, regardless of whether the student subsequently received an award for additional terms, completed the occupational program or withdrew.

Even though mentoring services will not be provided after the student completes or withdraws from the occupational program, the student is still considered part of the pilot program cohort for the two-year period.

#### **B. Data Reporting Requirements**

The college must report information about students in the Occupational Grant pilot program cohort to the Agency (see Appendix 2 for required data elements). The

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information may be reported by the MnSCU central office on behalf of MnSCU colleges, but it is ultimately the college’s responsibility for ensuring the data is provided in a timely manner. The Agency will use the information reported to evaluate the effectiveness of the pilot program and report findings to the legislature.

## **IX. Refund Process**

### **A. General Information and Deadlines**

Colleges may elect to award cents; therefore, colleges may request and return funds with cents. Any refunds of Occupational Grant payments must be returned to the college’s Occupational Grant account for the corresponding aid year regardless of the dollar amount of the refund. Colleges are responsible for calculating the amount of student refunds within a reasonable amount of time and returning funds to the Occupational Grant account in a timely manner.

Any remaining balance in the account must be returned to the Agency no later than August 31 following the close of the academic year or within 10 working days of a written request from the Agency. After the college has returned the end of year account balance to the Agency, any student refunds discovered after that point should be sent directly to the Agency along with the Refund Return Form (Appendix 22 in State Grant manual).

### **B. Refunds for Students Who Do Not Attend**

If a student fails to attend any classes for a term or payment period, the student’s Occupational Grant award for that term must be fully refunded to the college’s Occupational Grant account for that aid year.

### **C. Calculating Refunds for Students Who Change Enrollment Level or Withdraw After Occupational Grant Disbursement**

If, according to the refund policy the college is required to use, there is a refund of institutional charges for a student who withdrew from college or had a change in enrollment, all or a portion of that student’s refund may be due to the Occupational Grant program. (See ‘Common Definitions’ chapter for a definition of “Withdrawal Date.”)

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The appropriate Office of Higher Education Refund Calculation Worksheet (Appendix 13 of State Grant manual) or similar form must be used to document the calculation of refunds to the Occupational Grant program. The appropriate worksheet is for the college's use and is not intended to be sent to the Agency. This worksheet is also available in spreadsheet format on the Agency's web page under Campus Financial Aid Administrator Resources, [Program Forms, Spreadsheets & Instructions](#).

**1. Change in Enrollment Level (Partial Withdrawal)**

If, according to the policies described under 'Adjustments to Awards Based on Change in Enrollment Level,' the college is required to complete the Agency's Refund Calculation Worksheet or spreadsheet (Appendix 13c of State Grant manual) for students who withdrew from a class but were still enrolled for the term, the amount of the refund due the Occupational Grant program will be its proportional share of the college's refund of institutional charges based on the refund policy the college is required to use. If there is no refund of institutional charges based on the college's refund policy, the college is not required to return funds to the Occupational Grant program, but must make a note to that effect in the student's file for auditing purposes.

The following example illustrates the difference between a case where the Agency's Refund Calculation Worksheet or spreadsheet would be used (Case A) and a case of award recalculation (Case B) which, while requiring a refund, does not necessitate use of the Agency's Refund Calculation Worksheet. (The Refund Calculation Worksheet is used when a student attends and then withdraws from a class or classes before the college's award adjustment end date. Recalculation of the award occurs when a student drops a class during the drop/add period or withdraws from a class without having attended the class.)

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<b>Example of Adjustments to Award Due to Reduced Enrollment</b>	
<b>Partial Withdrawal Refund Case A</b>	<b>Award Recalculation Case B</b>
<p>The student initially received an Occupational Grant of \$800 for fall term after starting attendance in all classes. The student then withdrew from a five-credit class after the end of the drop/add period and before the college's award adjustment end date.</p> <p>The proportional amount of the college's partial withdrawal refund calculation (Appendix 13c of State Grant manual) results in a refund to the Occupational Grant program of \$150.</p> <p>The college would report the student's revised enrollment level to the Agency.</p>	<p>The student initially received an Occupational Grant of \$800 for fall term but withdrew from a five-credit class the student never attended. The Occupational Grant must be recalculated by subtracting the recalculated Pell and State Grants from the adjusted tuition and fees and any difference returned to the Occupational Grant program.</p> <p>The college would report the revised enrollment level to the Agency.</p>

## 2. Total Withdrawal

Colleges should refer to the definition of "withdrawal date" contained in the 'Common Definitions' chapter of this manual to determine the date of withdrawal.

This policy refers to students who withdraw from college *after* beginning attendance in all classes. (If a student withdraws *without* attending any classes, the Occupational Grant award must be fully refunded to the college's Occupational Grant account for that aid year). This also applies if the student attends classes but is granted a withdrawal date for all classes retroactively to the first day of the term.)

If the refund policy the college is required to use results in a refund of institutional charges and, after the college's share of any required refund to Title IV programs has been refunded (Unearned Title IV Aid Due from the School, Step 5.O. of Title IV Refund Worksheet), a proportional share of any remaining refund (Line E of Office of Higher Education Refund Calculation Worksheet or spreadsheet), not to exceed the amount of the Occupational Grant payment the student initially received for the term must be returned to the Occupational Grant program. Colleges should use the appropriate Office of Higher Education Refund Calculation Worksheet (Appendix 13a of State Grant

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manual) for a full withdrawal to calculate the amount of funds to return to state financial aid programs. The worksheet is also available in spreadsheet format on the Agency's website under Campus Financial Aid Administrator Resources, [Program Forms, Spreadsheets & Instructions.](#)

If a college disburses an Occupational Grant to a student who is later determined to have a withdrawal date set prior to the disbursement, the college must complete the appropriate OHE Refund Calculation Worksheet (Appendix 13a of State Grant manual) or spreadsheet to determine if a refund is due the Occupational Grant program. This can occur in cases where a college is not required to take attendance and becomes aware of the withdrawal after the date of disbursement.

On Line A of the Refund Calculation Worksheet/spreadsheet, the college would enter the total amount of all (federal, state, institutional, private) financial aid and cash applied to the original institutional charges for the term or payment period, not to exceed the amount of original institutional charges. In other words, if a student received \$4,000 in financial aid and original institutional charges were only \$3,500, the excess \$500 disbursed to the student for non-institutional expenses would not be reported on Line A.

In the case where a college is first adjusting an Occupational Grant award prior to calculating a refund for a total withdrawal, the adjusted award would be used on Line A of the refund calculation worksheet/spreadsheet rather than the original award amount.

On Line B of the refund worksheet, the college would report the amount of institutional charges it is allowed to retain for the term or payment period per its institutional or state- mandated refund policy.

Line C of the refund worksheet is the gross refund calculated by subtracting Line B from Line A. If the amount on Line C is not greater than zero, there is no refund required for

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state financial aid programs. If Line C is greater than zero, the college would report the amount of the college's share of any required refund to federal financial aid programs on Line D (from Step 5.O. of the federal refund worksheet), with Line E representing Line C minus Line D.

If the amount on Line E is not greater than zero, no refund to state financial aid programs is required. If the amount on Line E is greater than zero, it must be distributed on a proportional basis to non-Title IV aid programs requiring refunds, not to exceed the actual amount the student received from each program. All Minnesota aid programs (excluding State Work Study) from which the student received funds must receive their proportional share of the remaining refund before the student may receive any portion of the amount listed on Line E.

To determine the proportional share of the refund due each non-federal financial aid program, the college would first list all non-federal financial aid programs in Part II of the Refund Calculation Worksheet/Spreadsheet (Title IV aid, State Work Study earnings, and payments made by the student should not be included) that require a portion of any refund of institutional charges. For non-Title IV loans disbursed by colleges that charge by the term or payment period, use the total loan divided by the number of attendance periods in the loan period. Institutional aid may also be included if the program requires a refund upon withdrawal. Once the amount of the total non-Title IV aid package is known, divide the student's Occupational Grant by the amount of the term's total non-Title IV aid package to determine its proportional share of the total non-Title IV aid package. In cases where the original Occupational Grant is adjusted/recalculated prior to calculating the refund for a full withdrawal, the amount of the adjusted/recalculated Occupational Grant should be listed in Part II of the Refund Calculation Worksheet. The same would apply to the other state financial aid programs listed in Part II of the worksheet.



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**Example of Proportional Distribution of Refund to Non-Federal Aid Programs  
Institution Charges by Term**

**Non-Title IV Aid Package for Fall Term**

State Grant	\$1,000 (23.8%)
Occupational Grant	\$2,000 (47.6%)
YMCA Scholarship	\$ 800 (19.1%)
Inst Scholarship	<u>\$ 400 ( 9.5%)</u>
TOTAL	\$4,200

**Example A**

Line E of Refund Calculation Worksheet/Spreadsheet = \$700

Amount of Line E refund due Occupational Grant = \$700 x .476 = \$333.20

**Example B**

Line E of Refund Calculation Worksheet/Spreadsheet = \$4,700

\$4,700 x .476 = \$2,237.20 which exceeds Occupational Grant term award of \$2,000  
\$2,000 would be refunded to Occupational Grant

**3. Backdated Withdrawal Date**

A student who withdraws from a class, but is granted a retroactive withdrawal date back to the start date of the term will need to have the Occupational Grant award recalculated to reflect any changes in tuition and fee charges, Pell Grant and State Grant and any refund returned to the Occupational Grant program. In cases where the student is granted a retroactive withdrawal date for all classes, the entire Occupational Grant must be refunded.

**4. Award Adjustments and Refunds for All Non-Passing Grades**

If the student receives non-passing grades for all classes taken during a term, the federal financial aid guidelines requiring colleges to document attendance in these cases also apply to the Occupational Grant program. (This includes classes with a grade of 'FN' or any comparable grade signifying the student has failed and never attended the class.)

The state does not impose any stricter requirements upon colleges to document attendance in these cases beyond those already in place for federal financial aid programs. In other words, if the college first documents the student did attend at least one class offered over the entire term or payment period and is, therefore, eligible for

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the Federal Pell Grant, the state does not require the college to document attendance in all classes for the term.

If the college determines the student never attended a class, but did attend other classes, the Occupational Grant award must be recalculated to reflect any changes to the student's tuition and fees, Pell Grant or State Grant due to any required award calculations for those programs. The Occupational Grant can be increased to "back fill" for reductions in Federal Pell Grant or State Grant for classes the student did not attend, as long as the student attended at least one class during the term.

If the college determines the student never attended *any* classes during the term, the Occupational Grant for that term must be fully refunded to the college's Occupational Grant account for that aid year.

**5. Withdrawal for Military Service or Service-Related Medical Condition**

When a student must withdraw from college for military service, the standard refund policy for withdrawals is used. However, state law provides special options for students whose postsecondary education at a Minnesota college is affected due to military service or a service-related disability. The applicable law can be accessed at [www.leg.state.mn.us](http://www.leg.state.mn.us) by retrieving [Statute 192.502](#).

**6. Refunds for Previous Overpayments**

If a revision to the student's Occupational Grant award for the current aid year results in an overpayment, the overpayment must be returned to the college's Occupational Grant account for that aid year. In cases where the cause of an overpayment may affect Occupational Grant eligibility for a previous aid year, the college is required to review the student's records for the previous aid year and return any overpayments to the Office using the Refund Return Form (Appendix 22 of State Grant manual).

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## **X. Accounting and Audit Requirements**

### **A. General**

Each college must designate an employee(s) as the institutional representative to perform or supervise all financial and accounting activities related to the Occupational Grant program. Auditors from OHE will periodically visit each participating college to perform an audit. Colleges have the option of hiring a private auditing firm to conduct the audit of state aid programs in conjunction with an audit of federal financial aid programs. (See also 'Audits' under 'Common Definitions' chapter for criteria for hiring an independent auditing firm.)

Each participating college must establish a procedure by which an audit can be conducted by going to no more than three administrative offices within the college. In most cases, these will be the financial aid office, the business office and the registrar's office, but that choice is made by the college.

The college must make available all pertinent books, documents, papers and records for audit and examination for three years after the last day of a fiscal year or until all audit exceptions for the period are resolved.

Upon request by the college, the Agency will supply an updated audit guide.

### **B. Documentation of Student Eligibility**

All colleges must have written documentation that the student meets all of the program eligibility requirements described in the 'Student Eligibility' section in this chapter.

With respect to written documentation of enrollment status, the actual documentation, such as a fee statement or transcript, need not be kept at the financial aid office but must be readily available at the registrar's office or other responsible department within the college.

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## **C. Documentation of Occupational Grant Receipts, Disbursements and Refunds**

### **1. General Ledger**

All colleges must maintain an audit trail in the form of a general ledger (see Appendix 14 of State Grant manual for example) by state fiscal year that tracks the following transactions:

- the date and amount of Occupational Grant funds sent by the Agency to the college;
- the date and amount of Occupational Grant funds disbursed by the college to students. The college should keep supporting documentation for disbursement entries that identifies the amount of Occupational Grant funds disbursed to each student by check or deposited in the student's institutional or bank account by student name and social security number. The college must reconcile financial aid records to business office records regarding the amount of Occupational Grant paid to each student;
- the date and amount of Occupational Grant refunds or repayments from students deposited back into the college's Occupational Grant account. The college should keep supporting documentation for refund entries that identifies the amount of Occupational Grant funds deposited back into the college's Occupational Grant account for each student by student name and social security number. The college must also keep a paper or electronic copy of the refund calculation worksheet used to calculate the Occupational Grant refund; and
- the date and amount of Occupational Grant funds returned to the Agency by the college during the refund/reallocation process and at the end of each fiscal year.

## **D. Reconciliation**

### **1. Reconciling Occupational Grant Disbursement Records**

The financial aid office must reconcile its record of Occupational Grant disbursements with the college business office's records of disbursement throughout the fiscal year and reconcile with the Agency's records of Occupational Grant disbursements at the end of each fiscal year.

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**2. Return of Excess Funds**

The college must return all excess funds to the Agency no later than August 31 after the close of the academic year using the top section of the Agency’s Refund Return Form (Appendix 22 of State Grant manual). Colleges must also honor any requests for return of excess cash balances sent by the Agency throughout the aid year and return the requested amount within 10 days of receiving the request.

**E. Utilization of Occupational Grant Fund Interest Earnings**

Colleges are allowed to utilize any interest earnings on Occupational Grant funds advanced to the college to offset administrative costs incurred by the financial aid office from administering the Occupational Grant program on a decentralized basis.

**F. Prohibition Against Charging Student Fees**

The college shall not, under any circumstances, collect from Occupational Grant applicants or recipients any special fees for charges to directly cover the cost of administering the Occupational Grant program.

**G. Student Account Requirement**

A college must maintain a student account for each student. The college must provide the student with an itemized statement of the account at least annually and upon termination of enrollment.

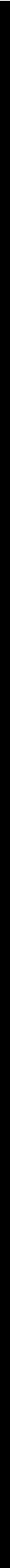
**H. Summary of State Audit Requirements:  
Institutional Documentation for the Occupational Grant Program**

At a minimum, each college must be able to produce the following for auditors:

1. individual student financial aid files for Occupational Grant recipients;
2. documentation that students meet program eligibility requirements as outlined under ‘Student Eligibility’ in this chapter;
3. documentation of the federal methodology need analysis results, tuition and fee charges, Federal Pell Grant and State Grant used to calculate or adjust the student’s Occupational Grant award;

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4. documentation of the student's enrollment level in an qualifying occupational program at the time of the Occupational Grant disbursement;
5. documentation of the college's priority dates for the ranking of initial and renewal applicants;
6. documentation of the priority and standard waiting lists used when ranking applicants for awarding purposes;
7. documentation of the disbursement dates of payments to individual award recipients;
8. written documentation of refund calculations for individual award recipients, e.g., copy of Refund Calculation Worksheet or Spreadsheet (Appendix 13 of State Grant manual);
9. written documentation of individual student refund amounts and the date these Occupational Grant funds were returned to the college's Occupational Grant account;
10. a written satisfactory academic progress definition and policy which conforms to both federal, state and program requirements;
11. written definitions of "full-time student," "three-quarter time student," "half-time student," and "less than half-time student" for purposes of Federal Title IV programs; and
12. documentation of the unusual circumstances requiring a professional judgment change of dependency status or adjustment of EFC or cost of attendance, professional judgment is performed.



**Minnesota  
Statutes  
Governing  
MnSCU  
Two-Year  
Occupational  
Grant  
Pilot  
Program**





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**Minn. Laws 2015 c 69 art 3 s 20**

**MNSCU COLLEGE OCCUPATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP PILOT PROGRAM.**

**Subdivision 1. Pilot program administration.**

The commissioner of the Office of Higher Education shall administer a pilot program pursuant to this section for the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 academic years including summer session.

**Subd. 2. Definitions.**

- (a) For the purpose of this section the terms defined in this subdivision have the meanings given them.
- (b) "College" means a two-year college in the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system.
- (c) "Eligible individual" means an individual who:
  - (1) is a resident;
  - (2) has graduated from a Minnesota secondary school, has as a Minnesota resident completed an adult basic education (ABE) program, or as a Minnesota resident, has passed general education development (GED) testing;
  - (3) first applies for a grant for the fall term immediately following secondary school graduation, passing GED tests, or completing an ABE program; and
  - (4) has completed a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
- (d) "Grant" means a scholarship granted under this section.
- (e) "Program" means a certificate, diploma, or associate of science or associate of applied science in a program area covered by the federal Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act and in an occupational field designated as high demand by the Department of Employment and Economic Development. "Program area" includes only the areas of:
  - (1) agriculture, food, and natural resources;
  - (2) business management and administration;
  - (3) human services;
  - (4) engineering, manufacturing and technology;
  - (5) arts, communications, and information systems; and
  - (6) health science technology.
- (f) To the extent not inconsistent with this section, the definitions in section 136A.101 apply to this section.

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**Subd. 3. AmeriCorps worker; exceptions.**

- (a) Notwithstanding any contrary provision of this section, an eligible individual who completes a 12-month or 24-month approved AmeriCorps program commencing immediately after secondary school graduation, may apply for a grant for the fall term immediately following completion of the AmeriCorps program. These individuals have a two consecutive academic year grant eligibility period commencing the start of that fall term.
- (b) For the purpose of this subdivision, an "approved AmeriCorps program" means a program overseen by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) including:
- (1) AmeriCorps Volunteer in Service to America (VISTA);
  - (2) AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC); or
  - (3) AmeriCorps State and National.

**Subd. 4. Grants.**

The commissioner shall, to the extent of available funds and subject to this section, make grants to eligible individuals to attend a program at a college.

**Subd. 5. Application.**

Application for a grant shall be made by a FAFSA and on any additional form required by the commissioner and on a schedule set by the commissioner.

**Subd. 6. Income limits for grant recipients.**

Dependent students reporting a parental federal adjusted gross income on a FAFSA of \$90,000 or less are eligible for a grant. Independent students reporting a family adjusted gross income on a FAFSA of \$90,000 or less are eligible for a grant.

**Subd. 7. Grant amount.**

The amount of a grant is equal to program tuition and fees minus any federal Pell grant received or state grant for which the individual is eligible. For the purpose of this subdivision, "fees" has the meaning given it in Minnesota Statutes, section 136A.121, subdivision 6.

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**Subd. 8. Eligibility period.**

A grant may be made only for academic terms that are during the two academic years commencing the fall term immediately after secondary school graduation, completing an adult basic education program, or passing all GED tests. A grant is available for up to 72 semester credits.

**Subd. 9. Satisfactory academic progress.**

An individual is eligible for a grant if the individual is making satisfactory academic progress as defined under Minnesota Statutes, section 136A.101, subdivision 10, and has a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale at the end of the first academic year and at the end of each academic term after the first academic year.

**Subd. 10. Credit load.**

A grantee must have accumulated at least 30 program credits by the end of the first academic year including summer term. A college must certify that a grantee is carrying sufficient credits in the second grant year to complete the program at the end of the second year, including summer school. The commissioner shall set the terms and provide the form for certification.

**Subd. 11. Grant renewal.**

A grant may be renewed for a second academic year. Application for renewal must be on a form provided by the commissioner and on a schedule set by the commissioner.

**Subd. 12. Mentoring.**

A grantee must be provided mentoring. Mentoring must include, but is not limited to:

- (1) communicating frequently and consistently throughout program participation;
- (2) developing a personalized student success plan. The plan must include concrete steps towards program completion and job placement and identify and make contingency plans for potential obstacles to program completion;
- (3) connect grantees to on-campus resources and personal development opportunities; and
- (4) financial planning.

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The commissioner shall issue request for proposals to provide mentoring activities. The commissioner shall select the proposal that in the commissioner's judgment demonstrates the best potential within available funding for achieving success in assisting students to complete programs. The commissioner may accept and select proposals made by colleges.

**Subd. 13. Outreach.**

The commissioner may through the office and by contract engage in recruitment for and promotion of the grants.

**Subd. 14. Insufficient appropriation.**

Grant awards shall be made based on the date of receipt of application from the earliest to the latest date. If there are not sufficient funds, grants shall not be prorated and eligible individuals shall be placed on a waiting list. Preference shall be given to timely received renewal grant applications prior to the award of new grants.

**Subd. 15. Reporting.**

- (a) A college must report to the commissioner the following information:
- (1) the number of grantees and their race, gender, and ethnicity;
  - (2) grantee persistence and completion;
  - (3) employment outcomes; and
  - (4) other information requested by the commissioner.
- (b) The commissioner shall report annually by January 15, to the chairs and ranking minority members of the legislative committees with jurisdiction over higher education finance by college and in aggregate on the information submitted to the commissioner under paragraph (a). The commissioner may include in the report recommendations for changes in the grant program.

**EFFECTIVE DATE.** This section is effective July 1, 2016.



**Appendices:  
MnSCU  
Two-Year  
Occupational  
Grant  
Pilot  
Program**



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**Appendices: MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program**

Appendix

Online Student Participation Agreement.....1

Student Data Reported by Participating Colleges.....2

Occupational Grant Award Adjustments and Refunds .....3





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**MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program  
Online Student Participation Agreement**  
<https://www.ohe.state.mn.us/ssl/SG/MnSCUOccGrant/participation/1.cfm>

**MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program**

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**Online Participation Agreement**

The information collected in this agreement will be classified as private information and used only for the administration and evaluation of the pilot program.

**Student's First Name**

**MI**

**Last Name**

**SSN (no hyphens)**

**Date of Birth**

**Gender**

- Male  
 Female

**Race [not used to determine eligibility]**

**Ethnicity**

- Hispanic/Latino  
 Not Hispanic/Latino

**Personal Email Address**

**Home Phone Number**

**Cell Phone Number**

**Alternate Contact's Full Name**

**Alternate Contact's Phone Number**

**Alternate Contact's Email Address**

**MnSCU Two-Year Campus Student Will Attend Fall 2017**

Select up to three schools.






to select multiple options:

- Windows: hold down the control (ctrl) button
- Mac: hold down the command button

Check here if you are the first in your family to attend college

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Occupational Program at Itasca Community College in Which Student is/will be Enrolled

### Mentoring Participation

In order to participate in the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program, you must agree to participate in free mentoring services provided by XXXXX. Mentoring services will help you develop a student success plan, connect you to on-campus resources and provide financial planning.

Do you agree to participate?

- Yes  
 No

### Best Days/Times to Reach Student

	Day of Week	From	To
Best day/time	<input type="text" value="select"/>	<input type="text" value="select"/>	<input type="text" value="select"/>
Next best day/time	<input type="text" value="select"/>	<input type="text" value="select"/>	<input type="text" value="select"/>

### Data Privacy Notice and Consent to Release Education Records For Participation in Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program

You have applied to participate in the Occupational Grant Pilot Program that is administered by the Minnesota Office of Higher Education (MOHE) together with your Minnesota State College. As a condition of participation, you are asked to provide information about yourself to MOHE and to consent to allow your college and the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities (MnSCU) system office to provide MOHE and Inside Track with information from your education records that is classified as private under state and federal law.

You are not legally required to provide this information or consent to these disclosures, but if you do not agree to provide all of the information requested you will not be able to participate in the pilot program or receive an Occupational Grant.

The data requested by MOHE includes the information you provide on this online agreement as well as data provided by your college, the MnSCU system office, the Statewide Longitudinal Education Data System (SLEDs) and the Department of Employment and Economic Security:

- Your Social Security Number (or assigned identifier for MN Dream Act applicants)
- Your name, date of birth, gender, race, ethnicity
- Your email address and phone numbers
- Your alternate contact's name, email address and phone numbers
- The name of the college(s) you plan to attend
- Whether you are the first in your family to attend college
- Whether you agree to participate in the required free mentoring services
- The amount of your Occupational Grant
- Employment outcome information
- The following data from your educational records will be provided by the MnSCU system office:
  - College identifier
  - College Tech ID
  - Semester enrolled
- The following data on each course you take at the college:
  - Course subject
  - Course number
  - Course title
  - Course start date
  - Course end date
  - Course enrollment status
  - Course credits
  - Course grade
- Program or major credential level (Degree, diploma or certificate)
- Program or major name
- Program or major code
- Academic status
- Cumulative GPA
- Total credits attempted
- Total credits earned
- The following data on up to three credentials (degrees, diplomas or certificates) you complete at the college:
  - Program or major credential level completed
  - Program or major credential date conferred
  - Program or major name completed

If you agree to provide this information, it will be used by individuals involved in administering and evaluating the effectiveness of the Occupational Grant Pilot Program including employees or agents of MOHE, employees or agents of Inside Track (the mentoring contractor), employees or agents of your college and the MnSCU system office, and others if you consent. This information will be used by authorized individuals to:

- Retrieve your records;
- Evaluate your application for the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program;
- Facilitate the required free mentoring services offered by the mentoring contractor: Inside Track;
- Help your college determine if you are meeting Occupational Grant requirements;

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- Evaluate the overall effectiveness of the pilot program, including employment outcomes.

**CONSENT**

I am voluntarily applying to participate in the MOHE/MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Program. I understand that I am not required to participate in this Program in order to enroll in the college. I agree to provide information and consent to allow my college and the MnSCU system office to provide information from my education records to MOHE and others for the purposes described above. I am giving this consent freely and voluntarily and I understand the consequences of my giving this consent.

This consent is valid for as long as I remain a continuing student at this college, but not longer than five years.

A photocopy of this authorization may be used in the same manner and with the same effect as the original document.

**Yes, I understand the terms** of participating in the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program and am providing my consent.

**No, I do not wish to provide my consent** and understand I will not be able to participate in the MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program.



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**MnSCU Two-Year Occupational Grant Pilot Program  
Student Data Reported by Participating Colleges**

- The amount the student's Occupational Grant
- College identifier
- College Tech ID
- Semester enrolled
- The following data on each course taken at the college:
  - Course subject
  - Course number
  - Course title
  - Course start date
  - Course end date
  - Course enrollment status
  - Course credits
  - Course grade
- Program or major credential level (Degree, diploma or certificate)
- Program or major name
- Program or major code
- Academic status
- Cumulative GPA
- Total credits attempted
- Total credits earned
- The following data on up to three credentials (degrees, diplomas or certificates) you complete at the college:
  - Program or major credential level completed
  - Program or major credential date conferred
  - Program or major name completed

