

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
MASSACHUSETTS ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS PROGRAM**

PURPOSE

The Massachusetts Assistance for Student Success Program (MASSGrant) is a grant assistance program funded by appropriations from the Massachusetts State Legislature in accordance with Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15, Section 19A. The MASSGrant program provides need-based financial assistance to undergraduate students who reside in Massachusetts and who are enrolled in and pursuing a program of higher education in any approved public or independent college, university, school of nursing or any other approved institution furnishing a program of higher education. The MASSGrant provides financial assistance to Massachusetts students demonstrating the greatest financial aid need. A student whose Student Aid Index (SAI) exceeds an institution's cost of attendance (COA) remains eligible to receive a MASSGrant, as long as that student is eligible to receive a Pell Grant in the same award year.

DEFINITIONS

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:

An eligible institution is defined as a state-approved public, private, independent, for profit or nonprofit, institution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized to offer undergraduate degrees, certificates or diploma programs and that is also approved by the U.S. Department of Education to administer Title IV programs. Massachusetts state-approved public, private, independent and non-profit Institutions located in states (VT, PA and the District of Columbia) that have reciprocity agreements, are approved by the Commonwealth, and award Associate and Bachelor's Degrees, are also eligible to participate.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

Any eligible degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the MASSGrant program, the student must:

- a) be enrolled in an eligible institution, as defined
- b) physically reside in Massachusetts for at least one year, as of the start of the enrolled term, with an intent to remain in Massachusetts consistent with Board of Higher Education (BHE) policy;
- c) be a U.S. Citizen, lawful permanent resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations; or have an approved eligibility status designated by the BHE pursuant to the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law or otherwise;

- d) completes the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) as applicable for eligible students under the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law annually;
- e) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- f) not be in default on any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution, or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid programs;
- g) have not earned a bachelor's degree or the equivalent;
- h) enroll, as a matriculated student, on a full-time basis (minimum of 12 credits, or the equivalent) in an eligible undergraduate program of study in an eligible, certificate or diploma program and have maintained eligibility at the time of disbursement;
- i) not have reached the maximum semesters of eligibility to continue to receive a MASSGrant award (eligibility is limited to a specific number of semesters based on the type of institution that the student attends);
- j) meet satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) according to institution's requirements and federal standards;
- k) if enrolled in a clock hour program, the student must:
 - 1) complete a minimum of 24 clock hours per week
 - 2) complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of July 1 – December 31 to qualify for a Fall disbursement
 - 3) complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of January 1 – June 30 to qualify for a Spring disbursement;
- l) if enrolled in English as a Second Language (ESL) program courses, the student must be simultaneously enrolled in either a certificate, associate or bachelors degree program in order to be considered eligible for a MASSGrant. Credits a student earns for ESL program courses may be counted towards his/her full-time enrollment status.

AWARD VALUE

Awards are determined by an indexing system approved by the Board of Higher Education that considers the federal Student Aid Index, and type of institution the student attends. Individual awards for the academic year may not exceed a student's demonstrated financial aid need. Eligibility for the MASSGrant is restricted to a maximum number of semesters as follows:

- 8 semesters if enrolled in a four-year undergraduate program
- 6 semesters if enrolled in a three-year undergraduate program

4 semesters if enrolled in a two-year undergraduate program
2 semesters if enrolled in a one-year certificate or diploma program

AWARD DISBURSEMENT

- MASSGrant funds are disbursed to the institution in two payments for the fall and spring semesters for students who meet all eligibility criteria, as certified by the institution.
- Payment of MASSGrant funds is sent directly to the institution from the Commonwealth's Comptroller's Office. One hundred percent of the funds from the MASSGrant award shall be used to credit the student's account. Funds must be disbursed to students during the traditional academic year.
- All refunds shall be sent to the Office of Student Financial Assistance and checks made payable to the *Commonwealth of Massachusetts*.
- Refunds may occur as a result of adjustments to SAI, changes to dependency status, and/or changes to a student's enrollment status. Refunds may also occur if the institution receives payment and becomes aware that a student has withdrawn, dropped below full-time status, taken an approved leave of absence, or otherwise fails to complete the period of enrollment as charged.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the MASSGrant. Institutions that have signed an agreement to participate in the Massachusetts State financial aid programs are required to share data for all students with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) or its designee, and the Office of Student Financial Assistance for this purpose. The program may be evaluated annually to determine any immediate impact or to determine if adjustments are required for various processes, such as disbursement of funds.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

All institutions receiving funds under the MASSGrant must have an active Massachusetts State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA).

AUDIT REQUIREMENT

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the MASSGrant.

- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the MASSGrant. OSFA will establish the timeline, specifications, and procedures for this report.

- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this Program shall, at all times, be open to inspection, review and audit by the Commissioner, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records, and documents are for seven years. An institution may retain such records for a period of five years, if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.