Montgomery College
endless possibilities

Student Financial Aid Verification and File Review Policies 2011-12

The Office of Student Financial Aid (OSFA) at Montgomery College verifies all files selected by the U.S. Department of Education (ED) processor. OSFA selects other students for verification who fall below our minimum income standard (see below) and or on a case-by-case basis to correct discrepant information.

Initial File Review

OSFA imports Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) from the federal processor. The College's student information system, Banner, reviews each record to determine which documents students must submit to complete their files. These documents may include:

MC Financial Aid Application
Dependent Verification Worksheet
Independent Verification Worksheet
Student's Federal Income Tax Return and W2s
Parent(s') Federal Income Tax Return and W2s
Asset Form
Copy of high school transcript
High School Diploma/GED
Ability to Benefit Documentation

Other documents requested, based on ED generated comment codes, may include copies of social security cards, copies of alien registration cards, citizenship documentation, copies of DD-214s, copies of social security benefits forms, default/overpayment clearance letters, and selective service documentation.

Tracking Letters

OSFA sends each student a letter requesting additional documents after the initial review of the ISIR. The letter tells the student how to obtain the required documents and to return them to OSFA within 10 days. Subsequent notifications are done through MC official college email addresses. OSFA does not award financial aid to the student until the requested documents are received and reviewed, and the verification process is complete. OSFA makes all corrections to student ISIR data electronically.

Documents required to complete student's financial aid files can be viewed on MyMC, the college's secure internal portal. Forms that must be submitted are downloaded and printed from the secure portal which links the student to Banner's self service web site.

Changes to the student's expected family contribution due to verification corrections may be viewed by the student via the secure web site.

Verification Items

Verification items may include the following:

♦ Household size
♦ Number in college
♦ Adjusted Gross Income (AGI)
♦ U.S. taxes paid
♦ Income earned from work
♦ Untaxed income such as child support, military benefits, and other financial support paid on behalf of students and their families

Minimal Income

In some cases, the student's family income appears to be insufficient to support the family. OSFA picks these students for verification. The standards for selecting students for this review are as follows:

1 family member   =   Less than $ 4000 income
2 family members =   Less than $ 6000 income
3 family members =   Less than $ 8000 income

Continue adding $2000 per family member.

Families that meet any of the Federal needs test criteria on the FAFSA are excluded from minimal income verification review.

File Review/Verification Checklist

When a file is reviewed OSFA staff complete a Verification Form for those students selected for verification. We record corrections to data and actions taken on the file. This electronic form is then placed in the student's permanent financial aid record in our imaging system. Additional file comments may be found on the comments screen in Banner, as well as noted on the documents or in the comment sections of the imaging system.

Ability to Benefit Review

In order to receive federal financial aid, students must be high school graduates, GED recipients, have passing scores on an approved ability to benefit (ATB) test, or document ATB with six completed credit hours of college courses prior to receiving aid.

Federal regulations require institutions to develop and follow procedures to evaluate the validity of a student's high school diploma if the institution has reason to believe that the diploma is not valid or was not obtained from an entity that provides secondary school education. The financial aid office requires all recent high school graduates to submit a copy of their high school transcripts or diplomas confirming graduation, or a copy of the GED certificate. If these documents cannot be provided, students are asked to complete the ATB process. This may involve taking an ATB exam, or an evaluation of prior college work. Students who satisfactorily complete six credit hours towards a degree or certificate (**not** including developmental classes) establish ability to benefit for federal student aid.

Montgomery College's Assessment Center administers the Accuplacer as an ATB test. The MC Assessment Center is not part of the Admissions or Financial Aid Offices and its primary purpose is not the administration of ATB tests. Testing center staff are independent of the admission process and report to campus Deans of Student Development. The Accuplacer is given at an assessment center by an employee who is a certified test administrator.

Accuplacer Passing Scores for ATB: 55 reading, 60 sentence skills, and 34 arithmetic.

Students who take an approved, independently administered test at a center other than MC may have the test publisher or the assessment center submit the official scores to MC to demonstrate students' ability to benefit. MC requires documentation from the external assessment center that the test and its administration met federal requirements.

Test scores are valid for ATB purposes indefinitely.