

OTAG Handbook

Student Application

Students apply for OTAG by filing a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) at <http://www.fafsa.gov> . It is recommended that the student file as soon as possible after October 1st. The FAFSA lists a “priority consideration date” however, since funds are limited, an initial eligibility date is recalculated each year based on budget projections and volume of applications received. The application receipt date is used for this process. The OSRHE will notify schools of the FAFSA filing cut-off date as soon as one can be determined. *Keep in mind that the allocations for the program are not set until the Regents meet in late May.* The OSRHE may also adjust the maximum EFC; currently, the maximum eligible EFC is 1700. We do not expect any adjustments to EFC unless additional funding is acquired.

Communication

Please note that most notifications are made through the OASFAA (Oklahoma Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators) listserv. To sign up go to <http://lists.onenet.net/mailman/listinfo/oasfaa> .

Please send all e-mail correspondence to reports@otag.org . This makes the information accessible to all OTAG personnel.

Award Amount

OTAG awards are a maximum of \$1,000/year for all students enrolled at least half time at eligible public universities, colleges and career technical centers. For certain low cost schools the award may be lower due to it being limited to 75% of tuition costs (including fees). For independent non-profit schools the grant pays \$1,300/year. Note: we collect cost information each year to determine the payment amount. The list of payment amounts are posted on the OTAG resources page at:

<http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml> .

Definition and Student Eligibility

OTAG is a **need based** grant for undergraduate students working on a degree or certificate at approved Oklahoma postsecondary institutions. Although a student may be otherwise eligible, the OTAG award may need to be reduced or cancelled to fit within total “need”. For OTAG purposes the federal definition of need is applied (cost of attendance minus EFC equals need). You will need to also subtract other “gift” aid to determine unmet need. We expect you will award OTAG before “self help” need based aid such as federal work study and subsidized loans. Please note that the minimum OTAG award is \$100 per semester. If unmet need is less than \$100 per semester before OTAG is applied, the award cannot be packaged; if new resource information is discovered after the OTAG award has been packaged, the OTAG award must be reduced or cancelled. Students must be “Oklahoma residents” and eligible for in-state tuition per the OSRHE residency policy (see Chapter 3 of the Policy and Procedures Manual at

<http://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/> (3.17 In-State/Out-of-State Status of Enrolled Students). **Out of state students that receive a waiver of out of state tuition are not eligible for OTAG.** Undocumented students may consider themselves Oklahoma residents and some may be eligible for in-state tuition; however, their eligibility for OTAG is limited. See <http://www.otag.org> for more details.

Generally, Oklahoma resident undergraduate degree-seeking students that have an EFC of 1700 or less whose FAFSA application receipt date is no later than the annual filing deadline and have not yet completed a bachelor's degree are eligible to receive OTAG. The student must be enrolled at least half-time at [eligible Oklahoma colleges, universities and career technology centers](#), must be enrolled in an eligible program, must be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP) and must be receiving a Pell grant for the payment period. *An exception to the Pell grant eligibility requirement exists for certain undocumented students.* See <http://www.otag.org> for additional information.

Eligibility requirements can be found at on the resources page at:
<http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml>

Certain military students and their dependents may indicate a residence other than Oklahoma on the FAFSA but still be eligible for OTAG. See Chapter 3 of the Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/> (3.17 In-State/Out-of-State Status of Enrolled Students).

Please carefully review the [Timelines and Procedures](#) for OTAG awards. This document is distributed annually via the OASFAA listserv. It is also available on the resources page. Generally, standard term program claims for the fall semester must be received around the 1st of October with the final deadline for fall claims set at mid-November. Standard term program spring initial claims are generally due by the first of March and mid-April is the final date for spring claims.

After the fall semester is essentially complete, funding levels are evaluated to determine if new awards can be made for spring only. If funding appears to be adequate, the FAFSA filing deadline may be extended for “spring only” awards. Please carefully read the notification. Sometimes “new” awards are allowed for spring only under the original criteria (those who were eligible for fall awards but did not receive them due to SAP, less than half time enrollment, lack of verification documentation, etc.). Sometimes we are able to award “spring only” funds to both those who met the original filing date and those that filed in between the original date and the new filing deadline. Until you receive notification, you should assume no “new” awards will be allowed.

Although there is no lifetime maximum OTAG, the administrative rules for the program specify that the student is eligible as long as they are eligible for funding from the Pell grant program. **If a student does not receive a Pell grant disbursement during a payment period because he/she has reached his/her lifetime limit or is so close to the limit that no Pell will be disbursed, the student cannot receive OTAG.**

Certain undocumented students are eligible for OTAG per the OSRHE residency policy (see Chapter 3 of the Policy and Procedures Manual at <http://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/> (3.17 In-State/Out-of-State Status of Enrolled Students)). Since many of these students are not able to complete a FAFSA, an application is available on our website (<http://www.otag.org>). The specific eligibility criteria are there as well. These students are also

subject to the application cut-off date and the maximum EFC (we calculate this based on the information submitted). Please note that undocumented students that begin postsecondary education in the fall of 2007 or later must provide the institution with a copy of a true and correct application or petition filed with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) to legalize their immigration status.

OTAG recipients must be eligible residents of Oklahoma per the State Regents' residency policy. Appearance on a pre-populated claim is not intended to confirm Oklahoma residency. Pre-populated claims are created by selecting otherwise eligible students that self-report Oklahoma residency on the FAFSA and also indicate intent to attend an eligible Oklahoma institution. Non-residents and ineligible undocumented students may appear on pre-populated claims and should be removed per OSRHE residency policy. The policy can be reviewed at <http://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/part3.shtml> . (See 3.17 In-State Out-of-State Status of Enrolled Students)

The student's eligibility for the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA, administered by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security; see <http://www.dhs.gov/deferred-action>) does not affect state aid eligibility at this time according to the OSRHE General Counsel's office. Many DACA eligible students receive a valid social security number for work purposes only and may believe they are eligible for aid. DACA students filing a FAFSA are not eligible for OTAG and should be removed from the claim unless the specific requirements outlined in the Regent's residency policy are met. (See 3.17.6 (4)) Generally, this provision allows certain undocumented students to receive OTAG if the student provides the institution with a copy of a true and correct application or petition filed with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) to legalize their immigration status. (DACA applications do not meet this requirement.) If you have an undocumented student that you believe might be eligible for OTAG, please notify the OTAG office.

Determining Eligibility for OTAG for Non-Standard Term Programs *At this time, Career Technology Centers only.*

For non-standard term programs, please award OTAG as you would Pell. Prorate the full-time amount based on the length of the program if necessary and disburse by payment period using Pell grant rules for completion of hours and weeks.

On the special claim, please be sure that you change FT to PT for students attending at least ½ time and fill in the amount of the payment period disbursement in the appropriate column. The change from FT to PT is used for reporting purposes only. All OTAG student eligibility rules apply such as Oklahoma residency, sufficient need, SAP, FAFSA filing deadlines, minimum disbursement (100/payment period), EFC <=1700, no bachelor's degree, attending at least ½ time, etc. Fall will need to be closed out for administrative purposes by December 15 and spring no later than May 30. There will be no official claim filing deadlines this year however, please claim funds in a timely way. If FAFSA filing deadline is increased, it will apply to awards after January 1st and the total available cannot exceed ½ the annual award.

You can file claims as often as necessary. Use a blank form if you just have one or two students for which you are claiming funds.

Generally, award like Pell however there will be some unavoidable differences. Remember that not all Title IV eligible schools are OTAG eligible and that final eligibility determination is made at disbursement. OTAG is a grant based on tuition and fees costs. If for some reason,

these charges are not applied to the students account or cancelled, OTAG should not be paid to the student or should be returned to OTAG if necessary. For any student to be eligible, tuition and fees should be a part of their school calculated cost of attendance. Tuition waivers do not necessarily disqualify a student from receiving OTAG; however, the waivers and all other need-based aid (including OTAG) must not exceed the student's need calculated per federal guidelines.

Notification of Award

Each school is responsible for determining eligibility, “packaging” the award, and notifying the student that he/she is eligible to receive OTAG.

Payment Processing

Each school's president or chief administrator must designate at least one bonded staff member as an authorized official to make certifications as to the eligibility of OTAG applicants. The form to be completed is available on the OTAG resources page at: <http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml> . We must have a signed form on file for the staff member before we can accept a claim that has been submitted and certified by that staff member.

When you are ready to pay the students or credit the amount to their accounts, request a “Pre-Populated” Award claim form by sending an e-mail request to reports@otag.org . We will place the file on the secure file exchange site (O-SAFE-instructions in the use of this site are available by e-mail request to reports@otag.org .) We receive FAFSA transaction information for students daily. The records shown on the claim are the latest (non-rejected) transaction for each undergraduate student that:

1. has indicated Oklahoma as the state of legal residence, ***(This is not proof of residency. This is just an indication that the student self reported Oklahoma residency on the FAFSA.)**
2. has listed your school on the FAFSA,
3. whose application receipt date meets the current requirement and
4. whose EFC meets the current level.
5. has not met or exceeded the Pell lifetime limit
6. has not indicated a bachelor's degree has been received

Changes made to an individual's FAFSA information after we create the claim form result in the claim form being “out of date,” so please use the claim within a few days or request another before you edit and submit it to us. Using an older file will result in a long e-mail asking you to verify the ISIR transaction number and EFC for each discrepancy, and will delay the process.

Generally, claims will be generated in Microsoft Excel format; however, claims can be generated and processed in text format upon request. The resource page also has instructions for receiving and sending claims in text format. For schools choosing to create their own Award Claim Forms, a blank template is available on our resource page at <http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml> .

Sending claims to OTAG in text format requires that a “certification” page be submitted per fax or e-mail attachment. The Text File Award Claim Form Transmittal Forms are available on the resources page.

Please pay particular attention to formatting and inputting the data on the Award Claim Form. If you import, or cut and paste data from a worksheet to the Award Claim Form, make sure that the leading zeroes in the social security numbers are properly entered into the Award Claim Form. There should be no blank spaces before and after the data in each column for the report to load successfully into our system.

To prepare pre-populated claim forms for submittal, delete the students that are not enrolled at your school or are not eligible for other reasons (for example: enrolled less than half-time, not making SAP, ***not an Oklahoma resident**, etc.) and adjust the award amounts for students who are in an over-award situation (for example: their OTAG grant money needs to be reduced to fit their “need”). The amount to be disbursed to a student in an over-award situation must be entered in column H. Remember the minimum award each semester is \$100. If a student’s application has been processed recently and a new transaction is being processed, you may need to adjust the transaction number or EFC. Also be sure to adjust the full time designation for students that are enrolled/attending only part time. Since the FAFSA does not ask for enrollment status, we assume full time for all students. If your students are enrolled at least half time (6 credit hours) but less than full time, please adjust the status from FT to PT. If the student is in an eligible clock hour program and is attending at least 12 hours per week but less than 24, please adjust the status from FT to PT. At many schools this does not affect the award amount; however, we need this information for our tracking purposes.

Annual maximum award amounts will be posted each year to the resources page at <http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml> .

****Students listing an out of state mailing address or dependent students listing any state other than Oklahoma as the state of legal residence for his/her parents will be highlighted on the pre-populated Excel award claim form. Please carefully review these students for residency eligibility.***

Check the transaction number to be sure it is the one on which you packaged the student. If you have completed verification and corrected the student’s information very recently, the transaction number (and possibly the EFC) may need to be updated.

You may need to add qualifying full-time active duty military students and/or their dependents that qualify for the award but didn’t put Oklahoma as their state of residence on the FAFSA. New legislation now extends in-state status to certain veterans, spouses and dependent children as well. ROTC participants are also now eligible for in-state status. Please add these at the end of your listed students. For eligibility information on these students please refer to the Regent’s policy on in-state and out-of-state status of enrolled students at <http://www.okhighered.org/state-system/policy-procedures/part3.shtml> .

Please complete the school information section at the top of the Award Claim Form (Lines 5 and 6 on the Award Claim Form). This section serves as your electronic signature; if it is not completed, the report will not be processed. Schools receiving text files must e-mail/fax the Text File Transmittal Form (available on our website) before their claims can be processed.

Please always use O-SAFE to send your completed form to us. O-SAFE is a secure form of file transfer. Claims must include personal information such as the social security number making a secure file transfer necessary.

Deadlines for submitted initial and final semester claims for standard term programs are posted to the OASFAA listserv each year. Go to <http://lists.onenet.net/mailman/listinfo/oasfaa> to sign up. The timelines are also posted to the resource page.

OTAG will send e-mails to resolve any discrepancies, and also notify you of the students whose claims were not paid. This may occur if the student has been disbursed at another institution, we have a non-resident student record in our database, or the EFC exceeds 1700 for the student record in our database. For students who have been disbursed at another school, you will need to confirm their attendance at your institution. OTAG will then request the other school to return the award funds for that student. The student will be awarded at your institution only after OTAG has received the funds from the school where the original disbursement was made.

Once the Award Claim Form has been processed, OTAG will place a disbursement report on the O-SAFE server, listing all the students for whom OTAG funds will be paid. Schools receiving text file reports will be able to retrieve their reports from O-SAFE as well. Please note that text file disbursement reports are provided for information purposes only. Schools using text files to submit claims must respond to disbursements using the provided spreadsheet files. We request funds to pay claims twice weekly on Monday and Friday. We submit the request as soon as possible and funds should be provided within a week when state funding for the program is available and sufficient to pay current claims. State institutions will receive funds by wire transfer. Career Tech Schools and Independent non-profit schools will continue to receive paper checks.

The Disbursement report needs to be completed and returned to OTAG after all funds have been disbursed to the students and no later than 30 days after the school receives the funds.

Adjust the disbursement report for any changes that may have occurred since the Award Claim Form was transmitted for processing. Changes may include cancellations when students withdraw, drop enrollment to less than 6 hours, or go from PT to FT or vice versa.

Adjustments in payments to students can be made using the funds associated with the disbursement report. This means that if one student's disbursement must be reduced due to an over award or change in enrollment status and another student on the same report becomes eligible for the full amount you are allowed to make the adjustment using the funds that would have been returned to us. **Please do not add students to a disbursement report for any reason. Also, you can only adjust up to the amount of the refund required.** In other words, if the additional amount you need to claim exceeds the amount you must return with that claim, you will need to process a separate claim for the student or students that need additional funds. Our system will not allow us to process a disbursement report as a claim and request funds. You will need to process a new claim with just that student or students that need additional funding. This may require you to refund money even when we owe funds to your students. This keeps the accounting records clear and provides appropriate tracking.

If adjustments need to be made in a disbursement report already submitted, please contact the office for specific instructions on late refunds.

When reporting a change to a student record, please make sure that a “Y” has been placed in column A of the disbursement report. The Disbursement Report is designed to auto-calculate the total amounts disbursed and refunds to OTAG. If the “Y” is not entered, the calculations will not be accurate.

Please enter the adjusted disbursement amount in column “H”, and an associated reason code for the change in disbursed amount in column “I”. A numerical reason code chart is available on our resource page (<http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml>) and appropriate codes should be used to indicate withdrawal, change in enrollment hours, or other reasons.

Finally, please make sure to complete the Institutions Accounting of Funds form contained in a separate tab at the bottom of the Disbursement Report. This form serves as your electronic signature for disbursement of OTAG funds, and also provides you with the total amount disbursed and the refund amount (if any) to be returned to OTAG. For state schools, wire transfer should be used to return funds to us. ***For your business office or whoever is responsible for refunds: please be sure to add OTG to the beginning or end of the invoice number indicator so that we know which program you are returning funds to.***

Reconciliation reports are available at the end of semester and end of the year for verifying disbursements and matching records.

Changes before and after Disbursement

If the student’s award needs to be reduced or eliminated after the claim is submitted and before disbursement, you can make the correction on the disbursement report and return the funds. If an ineligible student becomes eligible, you can submit another claim listing the newly eligible student until the semester deadline (generally mid-November for fall and early April for spring). If after the student has received a reduced award you find that the award could be increased, you can place the student on a claim and put the amount of the increase in the supplemental disbursement amount column (I) on the claim. Please use just the amount of the increase not the total disbursement.

If student eligibility changes after the award is disbursed, generally no change or adjustment is necessary unless it was (1) the result of an error and the student was never eligible for the disbursement, (2) to resolve an over-award or (3) the student is being withdrawn with no charges.

Resource Page:

<http://www.okhighered.org/admin-fac/FinAidResources/otag.shtml>

(This page has links to the administrative rules as well as the Oklahoma statutes that govern OTAG.)

Eligible School List:

https://secure.okcollegestart.org/Financial_Aid_Planning/Oklahoma_Grants/OTAG_Eligible_Schools.aspx