Certifications of Student Enrollment Status: A Registrar's Guide
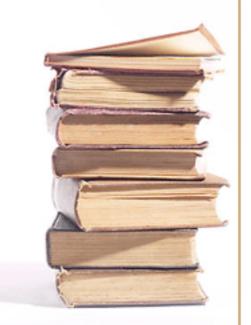
AACRAO 2007

Boston

Thursday, March 1, 2007
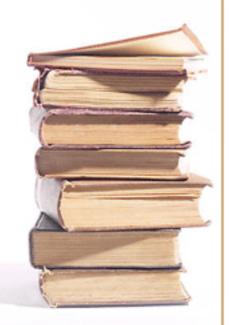
4:15 – 5:15

Sheraton, Back Bay Ballroom C

Session 305

Goals of this session

- Certifications and their purpose
- Full-time vs. part-time status standards
- Special situations and documentation
- DISCUSSION on other certification topics of interest

Why do we certify student status?

- Loan deferments
- Medical Insurance
- Auto insurance discounts
- VA Administration
- Scholarships
- For potential employment
- State licensing and professional organizations
- Access to institutional privileges or services

Enrollment status definitions

- **Enrollment status**: An indication of whether a student is full-time or part-time
- **Registered vs. Enrolled**: What is your institutional definition
- **Full-time student**: Someone enrolled in an institution of higher education who is carrying a full academic workload
- **Half-time student**: Someone who is enrolled in a participating school; is carrying an academic workload that is at least half the workload of a full-time student, as determined by the school; and is not a full-time student
- Academic workload is determined by the school under standards applicable to all students enrolled in the program
- **Academic workload my include any combination of courses, work, research, or special studies, whether for credit or not, <u>that the school considers sufficient to classify a student to be full-time</u>**

Adapted from: http://salliemae.com/service/gloss_af.html

Full-time certification purposes

To respond to "Is student full-time?" You must first ask "For what purpose?"

Externally defined criteria:
- Student financial aid – eligibility
- V.A. – benefits eligibility
- SEVIS – visa requirements
- Athletics – eligibility to compete based on NCAA/NAIA/NJCAA

Internally defined criteria:
- Registrar certifications based on institutional rules
- FTE Calculation
- National Student Clearinghouse reporting

Financial Aid – Full-time & Half-time status

- Eligibility for some financial aid programs requires a student to be at least half-time
- Half-time – defined as half the course load of a full-time student
- Institution defines full-time, but it must meet minimum standards in FSA regulations and state regulations may apply
- Non-credit or reduced credit remedial courses may be included in full-time calculation using normal institutional standards for determine credit value
- **Definition of full-time can differ from that used for other purposes (e.g. by Registrar)**

Source: 2006-2007 FSA Handbook, Volume 1: Student Eligibility

Financial Aid – minimum standards for Full-time

- May include any combination of courses, work, research, or special studies in your school's definition of workload
- Graduate students – no minimum standard
- Undergraduate students full-time requires at least:
  - 12 semester/quarter credits per term
  - 24 clock hours per week for a clock hour program
  - Series of courses or seminars = 12 semester/quarter hours over a maximum of 18 weeks
  - Work portion of a coop education program in which the work performed is equivalent to full-time academic load

Source: 2006-2007 FSA Handbook, Volume 1: Student Eligibility

Financial Aid status determination for students with disabilities

- The U.S. Department of Education's requirements regarding full-time status for financial aid supersede any adjustments made as a result of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

- In order for a student to receive a full-time load of financial aid, the student needs to carry 12 credits or more (undergraduate) or 9 credits or more (graduate).

- **Full-time status for registrar certifications is a separate issue from financial aid certification.**

Full-time for veterans benefits

- Student status is based on a combination of course meeting dates and credits enrolled
- Courses meeting for only part of a term count for benefits only for the portion of the semester in which the course is being taught
- Half credits cannot be rounded up for status certification
- **Non-credit bearing courses** can be counted as 1 credit only if required for graduation and documented as such
- Drops, failures, incompletes, and other actions may result in retroactive reduction of benefits

For more info: www.gibill.va.gov

SEVIS – International students

United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) requires international students on student visas be full-time to maintain student status (12 credits UG, 9 credits grad students unless on assistantship)

With appropriate verification from adviser, USCIS allows a student to enroll for fewer credits under these conditions:

Valid academic reasons (minimum 6 credits applies, no more than on term at each degree level)

- **Final term**, less than a full course load required (no more than one time at each degree level)

- **Graduate student conducting research or working on thesis or dissertation** (unlimited number of times)

- **Documented medical illness or condition** that prevents the student from taking a full course load (no more than twelve months at each degree level

- **Concurrent enrolled in two different schools** (total credits from both schools must be 12 or more

Athletic certification

- Standards for eligibility to practice or compete are specified by the NCAA/NAIA/NJCAA and the conference if applicable
- Standards require minimum credits per term as well as academic progress requirements
- Internal (institutional) definition of full-time is essentially irrelevant

How are Certifications Requested ?

- Online requests thru secure website?
- Submitted by requester in-person
  - With Downloaded PDF forms provided by institution
  - With form provided by agency
- Fax requests
- Mail requests
- Online through 3rd Party such as:
  - National Student Clearing House @ www.studentclearinghouse.org
  - Degree Verify @ www.degreeverify.com

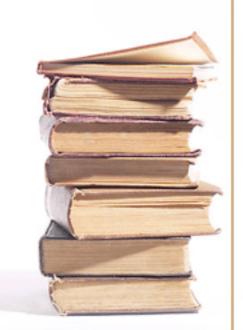# What information does your institution require in order to process requests?

- Name
- Student or SSN
- Signature or ID and PIN if through secure website
- The reason for the Enrollment Verification request (i.e. employment, etc.).
- The term requested for verification.
- The type of Verification.
- Necessary information to be provided….GPA, FT/PT, etc.
- The number of copies you would like.
- Delivery method
  - Mail to?
  - In-person? Date available for pick-up

Miscellaneous

Things to consider…

- When are certifications processed?
    - after refund period has passed?
- What is your turnaround time?
    - Have you published processing time?
- Is there a fee?
    - How can the fee be paid?

Survey on full-time status (2006)

- Sent by e-mail to 330 institutions, Registrar or similar titles only, director level

- 109 surveys returned – 33% return rate

- Used AACRAO member list to draw e-mail addresses

- Purposefully selected a variety of public/private, large/small, and institutional types

- Not a representative sample

- Survey intended to identify variations in policy, not statistical distribution of those variations

- Designed to be quick and easy

- Results would be helpful for development of broader survey if there is interest

Survey results - undergraduates

- # of credits is used as one or only basis for fulltime status by all but one UG institution

- # of courses is used as one or only basis for full-time status by two institutions

- For those using credits to determine full-time status, 12 credit minimum is almost universal

- Wide variation in full-time credits required for summer, ranging from 3 to 15 credits (probably due to variations in summer term length)

Survey results – graduate students

- # of credits most commonly used as basis for grad student full-time status
- 9 credits most commonly required for full-time (60%) followed by 12, 8, 6 or others
- Assistantship status and/or departmental certification of full-time effort also common as basis for full-time certification
- Wide variation full-time credits required for summer, ranging from 3 to 12 credits (probably due to variations in summer term length)

Survey results – professional students

- # of credits, # of courses and residency/internship status all used for full-time status determination for professional students
- When credits used to determine full-time status, 12 or 9 credit minimums most common
- Full-time certification requirement may vary within professional area at an individual institution (i.e. law and medicine not the same)

Survey - Summer session certifications

- Summer session status based in part on # of weeks of enrollment at some (15) institutions

- Disparity in credit hour requirements probably linked to differences in term lengths

- For financial aid, credit hours required for fulltime summer enrollment must be prorated from semesters/quarters during the academic year

- Variable length terms may be offered in summer, and financial aid non-standard term definition may be used (i.e. requires fewer credits to be full time for four week course than for an eight week course)
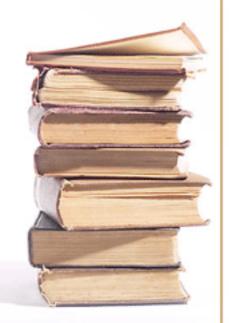
Survey - Special Cases

- **Audit** credits included in full-time calculation at 21 institutions
- **Correspondence** credits included in full-time calculation at 28 institutions, although many others do not offer correspondence courses (Note: distance education credits not addressed in survey)
- **Dropped** courses (after adjustment period) continue to count towards full-time for remainder of term at 24 institutions
- Full-time for **tuition** same as full-time for certifications at 76 institutions
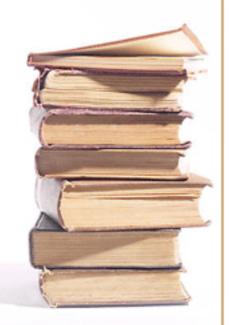
Other full-time categories (survey comments)

- Participation in student government or newspaper
- Specific programs designated as full-time
- Dissertation/thesis continuation
- Judgment call situations
- Others?

Enrollment Certifications – Date Available

- **Term date on which enrollment is first officially certified**
- After last day to cancel registration without assessment (22)
- On first day of term (40) – note may be the same as above
- After official count date (34)

Note: Many institutions do not certify enrollment until the start of a term, but will certify a student has registered prior to the start of the term.

Process for determining full-time status

Credits – Is student enrolled in enough credits to be considered full-time?
- – Credits rounded up, 11.5 rounded to 12, 8.5 to 9
- – Use equivalent credit value for zero credit courses
- – R credit (required, non credit bearing) counts as 1

Course – Is student in a course that is always considered full-time?
- – Intensive English for non-native speakers
- – Cooperative education or internship
- – Clinical rotation

Status – Is student in a status that is always full-time?
- – Graduate assistantship
- – Documented disability requiring load accommodation
- – Certified by department as full-time
- – Enrolled in a "placeholder" course that always indicates full-time (e.g. exchange program)

Disability accommodation documentation

Documentation must

- be current

- clearly state the diagnosed disability or disabilities

- describe functional limitations resulting from the disability or disabilities

- include complete educational, developmental, and medical history relevant to the disability

- describe the specific accommodations requested to assist in academic endeavors

- adequately support each of the requested accommodation(s)

- be typed on official letterhead and be signed/dated by an evaluator qualified to make the diagnosis (include information about license or certification and area of specialization).

Grad students – status documentation (ISU)

Graduate department may certify student is engaged in half-time or full-time effort toward meeting degree requirements (per Iowa State University Graduate College policy)
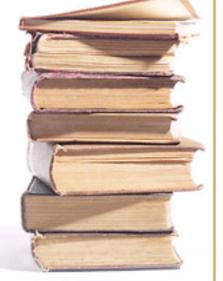Must explain why student not registered for minimum credits

Acceptable reasons:

- Student working half- or full-time on grad research or thesis/dissertation requirements
- Student is working on removing incomplete grades from a previous term
- Student enrolled in an alternate work-study course, practicum or internship that is part of the regular prescribed degree program
- Student in last semester of the degree program and does not need additional credits to meet degree requirements
- Student preparing half- or full-time for grad comprehensive or oral exams

Full-time/Part-time Guiding Principles

- Academic workload may include any combination of courses, work, research, or special studies, whether for credit or not, that the school considers sufficient to classify a student to be full-time

- Individual institutions define what is full-time or half-time

- Variation among institutions is appropriate given different missions, programs and levels, instructional delivery and calendars

- Registrar certifications are not required to be the same as those based on external guidelines

- We confirmed what we expected – little guidance on this topic, and this can be confusing, particularly for new Registrars

Question – was this session helpful and/or what other information were you seeking?

Questions???

Topic for next year???