



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY

GEN-07-07

October 9, 2007

Subject: Enrollment Requirements for the National SMART Grant Program.

Summary: This letter provides additional information on the course enrollment requirements for a student to receive payment under the National Science and Mathematics Access to Retain Talent (SMART) Grant Program.

Dear Colleague:

I am writing to you concerning an issue that has come to our attention regarding determinations of student eligibility for National SMART Grants.

Under §691.15(c)(2)(ii) of the program regulations, a student is eligible to receive a National SMART Grant if the student enrolls in the courses necessary both to complete the degree program and to fulfill the requirements of the intended eligible major. We have provided earlier guidance on implementing this provision stating that eligibility for a National SMART Grant for a payment period is based on the student being enrolled in coursework in the payment period that may include the courses in the National SMART Grant-eligible major or other courses that make up the student's National SMART Grant-eligible program, or both (see the 2007-2008 Federal Student Aid Handbook, page 3-70). However, upon a review of our prior guidance and in response to several questions we have received from institutions, we have concluded that it is important to provide additional guidance regarding what coursework is required for a student to receive a National SMART Grant.

An otherwise eligible student can receive a National SMART Grant for a payment period only if the student is enrolled in at least one course that meets the specific requirements of the student's National SMART Grant-eligible major. It is not necessary that the course be offered by the academic department that confers the degree in the eligible major. For example, a student majoring in biology is eligible to receive a National SMART Grant during a semester in which he or she is enrolled in a physics course if the physics course is required for the major even if the student is not enrolled in any biology courses.

A student who is taking general education courses or electives that satisfy general degree requirements for the student's National SMART Grant-eligible program, but who is not taking at least one course specific to and required for the National SMART Grant-eligible major, is not eligible for a National SMART Grant payment for that payment period. For example, the biology student described above may be taking courses during a semester in the humanities, the arts, and physical education in order to fulfill the general education

requirements of the degree program or major. However, to be eligible for a National SMART Grant the student must also be enrolled in at least one course required for the student's National SMART Grant major. If the student were enrolled *only* in courses that satisfy the general education requirements of the National SMART Grant-eligible program, but not in any courses that are specific to the major, he or she would not be eligible for a National SMART Grant payment for the semester.

### **Implementation**

Since the 2006-2007 award year has ended, institutions are not required to change 2006-2007 awards. For those institutions that have already packaged and/or disbursed, National SMART Grants to students for the fall payment period of the 2007-2008 award year, they must follow this guidance for National SMART Grant disbursements made during the remainder of the 2007-2008 award year. Of course, the guidance provided in this letter must be implemented for the 2008-2009 and subsequent award years.

We thank you for your cooperation and patience as we continue to implement this new program. If you have any questions on the issues discussed in this letter, please contact Fred Sellers by email at [fred.sellers@ed.gov](mailto:fred.sellers@ed.gov) or by phone at (202) 502-7502.

Sincerely,



Diane Auer Jones  
Assistant Secretary  
Office of Postsecondary Education