

Guide to Identifying and Reporting Other Financial Assistance

Office of Student Financial Aid



Washington
College

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Purpose of this Guide

To provide clarification, guidance, and examples to assist in the reporting of Other Financial Assistance (OFA), as required by the Reporting Other Financial Assistance Provided to Students policy.

Definitions

Term	Definition
Assistantship	A temporary job teaching or conducting research at a college, given to students as a form of financial aid.
Compensation	Any form of payment to a student in recognition of a student's employment service for the college.
Cost of attendance (COA)	An estimate of education-related expenses for the period of enrollment for which the student has applied for aid. Expenses included in the COA are tuition and fees, books and supplies, transportation, housing and food, and personal expenses as required and allowed by federal financial aid regulations. Total financial aid eligibility is limited to the COA for federal aid recipients.
Institutional aid	Institutional financial aid that is administered by all departments.
Fellowship	Payments made to students to aid in the pursuit of study or research. These payments support educational needs, such as tuition, fees, room, board, supplies, and travel, primarily for the benefit of the student's academic development. Typically, no past, present, or future services are expected in return for these payments.
Financial aid package	The combination of federal, state, institutional, and external aid awarded to a student for a particular period of enrollment. Includes grants, scholarships, Federal Work Study (FWS), fellowships, assistantships, fee remissions, need-based work income, and student and parent education loans from all sources.
Financial Assistance	Any cash, cash equivalent (e.g., gift card, pre-paid debit card), or non-cash item (i.e., cost of item), including but not limited to, scholarships, grants, net earnings from need-based employment, loans, prizes, winnings, gifts, awards, and miscellaneous assistance.
Financial need	In most cases, a student with federal aid awarded on the basis of need cannot have total assistance in excess of need. All assistance counts toward need with the exception of non-need-based federal and private student loans. An eligible student's COA minus SAI minus OFA not received under Title IV equals the student's financial need.
Grant	Any gift aid funds awarded to a student that do not have to be repaid.
Internship	A form of experiential learning that integrates knowledge and theory learned in the classroom with practical application and skills development in a professional workplace setting.
Non-need-based employment	Work that is considered employment under either state or federal law and is not based on need. Such employment is not considered OFA and compensation does not need to be reported (https://washcollpub.cfmnetwork.com/B.aspx?BookId=13439&PageId=469385).
Other Financial Assistance (OFA)	The amount of financial assistance for a period of enrollment that a student (or parent on behalf of a student) will receive from federal, state, institutional, or other sources such as scholarships, grants, net earnings from need-based employment, and loans (34 CFR 682.200(b)).
Prize, winning, or gift	Payments or winnings including tangible personal property and cash equivalents received as a result of a contest or drawing.
Scholarship	A type of gift aid awarded to a student that does not need to be repaid. Funds are typically based on merit or a combination of merit and need.
Stipend	Payment to students to assist with living expenses during an educational or training experience.

Term	Definition
Student	A person seeking a degree at Washington College. A student ceases to be a student upon graduation or official separation from the college. A student who is not enrolled in the summer but has not graduated is still a student.
Student Aid Index (SAI)	The SAI is the eligibility index used to determine a student's eligibility for federal, and in some instances, state and institutional need-based student financial aid. Generally, students with a higher SAI are eligible for less need-based financial aid. The SAI is based upon the information provided by the student and their family on the FAFSA.
Title IV aid	Federally funded financial assistance such as Pell Grants, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), Direct Subsidized Loans, Direct Unsubsidized Loans, and Direct PLUS Loans.
Travel expenses	Generally, expenses associated with traveling to attend or present at a professional conference; conduct fieldwork or other research activities; or travel on behalf of the college, such as attending an event for a department. Includes, but is not limited to, payments for study abroad, required coursework, academic research, professional development, or other travel allowances.

Timing of Reporting

Once a staff/faculty member or department becomes aware of OFA or potential OFA provided to a student, reporting should be done as soon as possible to avoid potential negative impacts on the student such as a reduction in other aid or creating a bill.

Student Financial Aid (SFA) may be able to offer a possible COA increase to offset the OFA.

Financial Assistance that **MUST** be Reported as OFA

College and external sources of financial assistance that must be reported as OFA, regardless of the amount or if the assistance is taxed or not taxed, include but are not limited to:

1. Financial assistance given to the student when funds could be used to cover the costs of enrollment and associated educational expenses.
 - a. Includes cash, cash advance, and/or cash equivalent (e.g., gift cards, pre-paid debit cards) provided to a student because of postsecondary enrollment (e.g., groceries, gas). This includes the value of any gifts or gift cards that are given to a student when the gift is tracked on a per student basis.
 - b. Even if assistance is earmarked to cover costs that are not included in the COA (such as a recommended optional enrichment activity or expenses paid outside of the period of enrollment), assistance is still OFA if awarded or paid to students because of postsecondary enrollment.
2. Scholarships and other assistance applied to a student's account.
3. Prizes, winnings, or gifts (including tangible personal property) that are received because of a contest or drawing and are tracked on a per student basis must be reported as OFA when *any* of the following occur:
 - a. Contest or drawing prizes of cash or non-cash items (including cash equivalents) that can be used to pay educational expenses.
 - b. Eligibility to participate in the contest or drawing is restricted to Washington College students.
 - c. The recipient is required or has the discretion to use the prize for educational purposes.
 - d. The contest or drawing is part of the student's course, program, or degree completion (such as a poster competition required by an instructor as a course requirement).
4. The scholarship/grant portion of fellowships, stipends, and assistantships.
5. Payments made or the monetary value of any materials or equipment given to and owned by the student, which are required by the academic program. For example, musical instruments, computer software or hardware.

6. University fees and charges paid on behalf of or paid directly to the student.
7. Other sources considered reportable OFA include but are not limited to:
 - a. Dependent fee authorizations
 - b. Employee fee waivers
 - c. Housing discount programs
 - d. Churches, professional, civic, or service organizations and private foundation funding
 - e. Employer provided tuition assistance programs

Financial Assistance That MAY Have to be Reported as OFA

College and external sources of financial assistance that may be required to be reported as OFA include but are not limited to:

1. Trips, conferences, travel expenses, or other such activities (such as payments for study abroad, required coursework, academic research, professional development, or other travel allowances)
 - a. Expenses that *meet requirements* of a student's academic program are reported as OFA when: payment is made directly to a student, reimbursed to a student, or paid to a third party.
 - b. Expenses that *do not meet requirements* of a student's academic program are not reported as OFA when: payment is reimbursed to a student by the school for actual expenses incurred or payment is made directly to a third party.
2. Fellowships, stipends, or assistantships
 - a. Reported as OFA if not considered employment under federal or state law.
 - b. Not reported as OFA if considered employment under federal or state law and not based on need.

Financial Assistance That DOES NOT Have to be Reported as OFA

College and external sources of financial assistance that are not reported as OFA include but are not limited to:

1. Non-need-based wages earned through student employment at Washington College considered employment under federal or state law.
2. Most Federal veterans' education benefits.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: When must OFA payments be reported?

A: Reporting should occur at the time the OFA for a student is known.

Q: Is there a minimum threshold for reporting?

A: There is no minimum dollar amount to avoid treating financial assistance provided to a student as OFA. Any amount provided (no matter how small) must be reported.

Q: How will reporting financial assistance impact a student's other financial aid?

A: The amount of assistance will be included in the financial aid package. Inclusion of assistance does not always result in adjustments to other aid.

Q: Are there any options to minimize the impacts to other financial aid when factoring OFA?

A: If a student's other financial aid is impacted, SFA will work to mitigate the effect whenever possible.

Reporting OFA as soon as possible will assist SFA in this process. SFA will make any allowable COA increases that are not already included in the COA, such as program fees.

Q: Do gift cards have to be reported?

A: The value of the gift card is considered OFA if it is tracked on a per student basis. If a department does not track the gift card on a per student basis, it is not OFA.

Q: Do gifts such as hats or swag provided by a department have to be reported as OFA?

A: The value of the gift is considered OFA if receipt of the item is tracked on a per student basis. If the item is not tracked on a per student basis, it is not OFA.

Q: Do payments made to students during the summer (when the student was not enrolled), need to be reported as OFA?

A: Yes. Assistance paid to students during the summer must still be reported and will be counted for the following academic year.

Q: Are all fellowships treated as OFA?

A: If a fellowship is considered employment under federal or state law, it would be exempt from OFA reporting. Fellowships that are not employment under federal or state law are reported as OFA.

Q: If a faculty member provides students with a textbook, does the value need to be reported?

A: Yes, if the textbook is gifted to a student. No, if the textbook is loaned.

Q: Are all forms of veterans' education benefits exempt from OFA reporting?

A: Most veterans' education benefits do not need to be reported as OFA.

Scenarios

Scenario 1 – Optional Travel for Enrichment

A college program sponsors several of their students on a volunteer, community service enrichment trip over the winter break, during a period of non-enrollment. The optional trip is not required as part of the students' courses or degree program and could not be used as elective coursework.

- The funds provided for this trip are OFA if:
 - Paid directly to the student.
- The funds are not OFA if:
 - Paid by Washington College directly to a third party or reimbursed to a student by the school for actual expenses incurred.

Scenario 2 – Course Required Travel

History 401 requires travel to Gettysburg to study the battlefield, and the Department of History pays for bus travel, overnight lodging, and per diem.

- Amounts paid to a student, reimbursed to a student, or paid directly to a third party are OFA since this is a course requirement.
- A Cost of Attendance appeal may be considered since the additional costs are part of a course requirement.

Scenario 3 – Conferences and Travel

A student expresses interest in attending a national conference that is not a program requirement. Washington College funds are approved to pay for the airfare, registration, and meals.

- The funds provided are OFA if advanced or paid directly to the student.
- The funds are not OFA if paid by Washington College directly to a third party or reimbursed to the student by the school for actual expenses incurred.

Scenario 4 – Conferences and Travel

A student attends a competition at another higher education institution that is not a program requirement. The Washington College department pays the host institution directly for the student's entrance fee.

- The entrance fee is not considered OFA since the competition is not required for program completions and payment is made directly to a third party.

Scenario 5 – Gift/Prize

As part of the official end-of-season banquet, the Career Center gifts watches valued at \$75 to graduating seniors to recognize their work with their office over the span of their college career.

- The value of the watch is OFA as the gift is provided to the student due to enrollment at Washington College.

Scenario 6– Gift Card

A department will be hosting an event and student participants will be given a \$10 gift card for attending.

- The value of the gift card is reportable as OFA if the recipients are tracked on a per student basis.
- The value of the gift card is not considered OFA if there is no per student tracking.

Scenario 7 – Gifts Provided by Student Organizations

A student organization is providing promotional items such as shirts to student participants attending an event. Is the value of these items reportable as OFA?

- The value of the gift is reportable as OFA if the recipients are tracked on a per student basis.
- The value of the gift card is not considered OFA if there is no per student tracking.

Scenario 8 – Costs Required for the Program

A student submits a grant application and is approved for costs associated with travel to conduct research during the summer, which will ultimately be used as part of the student's SCE. The student receives funding for travel, food, lodging, and other expenses approved through the grant approval process.

- The funds provided are OFA if advanced or paid directly to the student.
- The funds are not OFA if paid by Washington College directly to a third party or reimbursed to the student by the school for actual expenses incurred.
- Cost of Attendance appeal may NOT be considered since the additional costs are not part of a course requirement.

Scenario 9 – Software

To assist a student with his thesis, a faculty member purchases software for the student using a college faculty support fund. The student will own the software provided.

- The amount spent on the software is OFA since the thesis is a requirement to earn the degree and the software is gifted to the student.

Scenario 10 – Contest

A student enters and wins a beauty pageant that is limited to students at Washington College; the prize is a \$500 visa gift card.

- The gift card is counted as OFA since the pageant was limited to students at Washington College and the student had to be enrolled to enter the contest. The fact that the prize was a gift card changes nothing since the gift card could be used to pay for educational expenses.

Scenario 11 – Fellowships or Assistantships

A student enters a fellowship program and is awarded a scholarship and a stipend. The stipend is not considered employment under federal or state law. Is any part of the fellowship considered OFA?

- Both the scholarship and the stipend are considered OFA.

Scenario 12 – Internships

A student is offered an internship opportunity for the summer. The amount offered to the student includes both non-need-based employment and funds to cover the student's housing. Are either of these considered OFA?

- Non-need-based employment is not considered OFA.
- Funds to cover housing are considered OFA.

Scenario 13 – Funds to cover study abroad fee

A student is wanting to study abroad and asks a department for assistance in paying the study abroad application fee.

- If the fee is considered a use of emergency funds, this would not be considered OFA.
- If the fee is not considered a use of emergency funds, this would be considered OFA.

Scenario 14 - Graduation Awards/Prizes

Students receive cash awards and prizes such as plaques when they graduate.

- The value of the cash and prizes are reportable as OFA due to enrollment at Washington College

How to Report

To report OFA, please complete the Reporting Other Financial Assistance Provided to Students Form and send to fa_office@washcoll.edu, unless your unit is already tracking and reporting the OFA to SFA via an existing university process.

Questions

Questions may be directed to the Office of Student Aid at fa_office@washcoll.edu.