

The Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance



ACTION LETTER

Action Letter #1
October 2025

2025-2026 PROGRAMS GUIDELINES UPDATES

Follow-up to Requests for 2025-2026 Student Financial Aid Guidelines Changes and Clarifications

Dear Colleague:

This Action Letter follows a 09/09/25 meeting between the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) and community college, state university and University of Massachusetts financial aid directors to discuss updates. The purpose of this letter is to summarize DHE's responses to requested changes and clarifications to the 2025-2026 state financial aid program guidelines. A summary of DHE's responses to the requested changes and clarifications are outlined below.

Requested Change #1: Add Paramedics Programs to "Eligible Program" under MassEducate

DHE Response:

Paramedics programs have been added to those that qualify under the MassEducate program and the newly updated 2025-2026 MassEducate program guidelines that reflect the above change are accessible at:

<https://www.mass.edu/osfa/schools/publications.asp>

Requested Change #2: Replace "Stipend" with "Allowance"

DHE Response:

The term "*stipend*" has been replaced with "*allowance*" throughout the 2025-2026 MassReconnect, MassEducate and MASSGrant Plus guidelines. The revised guidelines for these programs are available at the same link above.

Requested Change #3: MASSGrant Eligibility for Students with Prior Associate's Degrees

Allow students with prior associate's degrees to qualify for a MASSGrant award if they have remaining MASSGrant semesters of eligibility.

DHE Response:

Due to the increase in demand under the MASSGrant program, DHE will retain the current policy of limiting the MASSGrant program to a student's first bachelor's degree. The MassReconnect and MassEducate programs commit to meeting a student's full tuition, fees and allowance costs.

However, to protect current students' existing financial aid award packages, students who are attending Massachusetts community colleges that have already received or earned sufficient credits toward their first associate's degree will be allowed to retain any MASSGrant funds they were awarded in award year 2025-2026, for this year only. Going forward, however, and starting with award year 2026-2027, students that have earned either a prior associate's degree, or sufficient credits to receive one, will not be eligible to receive a MASSGrant award.

Requested Change #4: Definition of "Non-Loan Aid" in MassReconnect and MassEducate Awards

In the formula that determines a student's MassReconnect and/or MassEducate award, restrict "non-loan aid" to federal and state grant sources only, as reflected in the FY26 Massachusetts budget language for the two programs.

DHE Response:

The DHE's current 2025-2026 MassReconnect and MassEducate guidelines (as well as the 2024-2025 guidelines) define "non-loan" aid broadly and consistent with how DHE defines "non-loan" aid in all other DHE-administered state financial aid programs. However, we understand that some financial aid offices have restricted "non-loan" aid to federal and state grant sources only. The DHE is open to evaluating both approaches going forward, based on data which will help the DHE assess the impact to students and the impact to funding appropriations and allocations. Meanwhile, DHE will hold harmless institutions that have awarded MassReconnect or MassEducate awards for year 2025-2026 based on a definition of "non-loan aid" which is restricted to federal and state grant aid.

Request for Clarification: Allowance Disbursement When a Student Does Not Enroll for Subsequent Term

Will there be a case of an over-award when a student receives an allowance greater than one-half of the maximum for fall and the remaining portion of the yearly total in spring, but fails to enroll during the latter term?

DHE Response:

In cases of non-enrollment in subsequent term(s) within the same 2025-2026 award year, a student shall retain the fall allowance amount as awarded and disbursed, if the sum of allowances for all terms does not exceed the maximum allowed under the existing enrollment status.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance at 617.391.6070 if you have any questions.

Thank you,
Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance