

Q & A on the Community College Completion Grant Program

SEPTEMBER 14, 2017

1. QUESTION: IS THIS PROGRAM ONLY FOR FIRST-TIME FRESHMEN OR FOR STUDENTS WHO HAVE NOT ATTENDED BEFORE?

Answer: The Completion Grant can be paid to students entering anywhere in their educational path. The student's pace towards completion is established based on the student's program and how far along the student is in their program based on prior completed units and units credited from other sources.

2. QUESTION: SO, IF A STUDENT HAS ATTENDED COLLEGE BEFORE, CAN THEY PARTICIPATE?

Answer: Yes. The student's comprehensive Student Educational Plan (SEP) will establish the units required to complete their program, the milestones necessary to complete and the timeframe for completion.

3. QUESTION: CAN THE UNITS THAT THE STUDENT STARTS WITH COME FROM ANY SOURCE?

Answer: Yes. A student is allowed to participate in the Completion Grant program if they are on-pace to complete, minus any units credited towards their degree goal. For example, the college units the student has already earned may come from many sources:

1. College units earned while the student was in a dual enrollment program with a high school
2. College units earned at a California Community College or other college
3. College units granted based on the student's completion of AP or IB coursework while in high school
4. College units granted as a result of successful credit examination at a community college
5. College units granted based on credit awarded due to military service
6. College units granted from other sources

A college will determine pace based on the number of units already credited. The college uses these units to determine how many are applicable towards the degree goal to set the remaining terms of eligibility. A Comprehensive SEP will be necessary to determine the number of units required to earn a degree and no Completion Grant funds may be disbursed until a Comprehensive SEP is completed.

This is remembering that the student must take 15 units per term or be on track and be taking the necessary steps to complete 30 units in an academic year, including attending summer sessions and any intersessions, if necessary. Students in jeopardy of not meeting pace should receive counseling interventions to provide support and guidance to help the student stay on

pace. It is the intent of the Legislature that resources from Equity and SSSP will be utilized to assist the student.

4. QUESTION: DO THE UNITS THAT ARE PART OF THE 15-UNIT REQUIREMENT HAVE TO BE REQUIRED UNITS FOR THE STUDENT'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM?

Answer: A student is paid based on enrolled coursework that is required to complete within the required time frame. Colleges will evaluate the student's pace on a term-by-term basis. See the College Completion Grant Chart for examples of term attendance combinations eligible for payment.

5. QUESTION: HOW LONG CAN A STUDENT BE PAID?

Answer: This will depend on the student's set timeframe at point of entry to receive the grant. For example, if a continuing student only needs 33 units for degree completion, the student is only eligible to receive the grant for one year: primary terms plus adjacent secondary terms totaling 30 annual units. See also Question 6.

- A student can be paid as long as the student maintains 15 units per primary term (see next question) and is meeting the pace for their program
- Pace is earning a sufficient number of credits to be on pace to complete an AA ADT or to transfer to a four-year university in two years; or for three years if required to take Basic Skills; or is in a CTE program or other CCC Certificate within the published time for that program
- Remember that the student must be receiving the FTSSG for all terms that they receive the Completion Grant

6. QUESTION: HOW ARE STUDENTS IN HIGH UNIT MAJORS TREATED? IS THERE A STANDARD LIST OF HIGH UNIT MAJORS OR DOES THE COLLEGE ESTABLISH THAT?

Answer: Majors requiring more than the standard 60 units may be paid Completion Grant funds for the length of their program, assuming continued eligibility and payment in the FTSSG program. For example, a major requiring 72 units could receive one more term of CCCG payment assuming the student was paid FTSSG for that final term. Each college/district will have some high unit majors. Refer to your catalog to determine which majors are high unit majors at your college.

Baccalaureate degree programs are considered high unit majors.

7. QUESTION: SOME STUDENTS MAY ONLY COMPLETE FEWER THAN 15 UNITS IN A TERM AND BE IN JEOPARDY OF FALLING OFF PACE. CAN THEY MAKE THESE UNITS UP?

Answer: Yes, but no further Completion Grant funds can be disbursed until pace is reestablished. The "catch up" units may be earned in adjacent intersessions or summer to maintain the student's pace.

8. QUESTION: COULD WE PAY A STUDENT A COMPLETION GRANT WHO TOOK 12 UNITS FOR FALL THEN ENROLLED IN 3 UNITS FOR THE WINTER INTERSESSION?

Answer: Yes. However, when measuring pace after the Fall term they must show that they are on-pace towards completion. For example, this could be evidenced by enrollment in winter intersession coursework.

Remember that participants must be receiving FTSSG funding for the associated primary term. Colleges should set their Completion Grant policies to allow students to meet the 15-unit requirement by taking units in an adjacent intersession or summer term. There is no restriction on the whether the intersession or summer term is before or after the primary term as long as they are adjacent.

9. QUESTION: HOW DO WE PAY IN THE SCENARIO OF A NEW FALL STUDENT/60 UNIT DEGREE/TIMELINE 2 YEARS WHERE THE STUDENT TAKES 12 UNITS IN FALL, 12 UNITS IN SPRING AND 6 UNITS IN SUMMER?

Answer: For a new student with no completed units, 12 units per term will not put them on pace to complete with two years. The student could receive FTSSG for the fall term but not CCCG unless the student then enrolls in an intersession adjacent to fall and those units bring the student on pace. The college could then pay fall based on the combined units of fall and the intersession. Likewise, spring could be paid only if the adjacent summer enrollment put them back on pace.

10. QUESTION: HOW DO WE PAY IN THE SCENARIO OF A CONTINUING FALL STUDENT/60 UNIT DEGREE/TIMELINE 2 YEARS WHERE THE STUDENT TAKES 12 UNITS IN FALL, 12 UNITS IN SPRING AND 6 UNITS IN SUMMER?

That depends on where the student is in regards to completing their program per their SEP. If the student is on pace to finish on time within their timeframe, for example they had only 24 units to complete, then the fall CCCG payment could be made. If they had more than 24 units to complete, with no indication (by enrollment) in a winter intersession, the student could not receive the CCCG for fall because they are not making pace. If the student had, for example, only 24 more units to complete, then the 12 fall units would keep them on pace, they could receive the FTSSG so they and they could receive CCCG.

For spring, if only 12 units were remaining, then the spring CCCG payment could be made. If the student is enrolled in 12 units but their SEP indicates they still need more than that to complete by the end of spring, then they could not receive the CCCG. However, if the student was then in attendance for Summer, those units could be tied to the Spring units and the student could receive payment because now the student will complete on time

See the examples for more scenarios.

10. WHEN SHOULD WE PAY THESE STUDENTS?

Answer: Do not pay earlier than at first census used for apportionment and then only if you have paid Cal Grant and FTSSG or are paying those simultaneously with the CCCG.

11. QUESTION: IF A STUDENT DROPS UNITS AFTER RECEIVING PAYMENT FOR A TERM, MUST WE TAKE BACK THE PAYMENT?

Answer: No. the student may keep that payment. However, going forward, the student may not be on pace to complete their program within the required time and hence becomes ineligible for payment.

Remember that the student must be receiving FTSSG in a primary term to receive a Completion Grant and be on pace towards completing within their timeframe. 30 units in an academic year including summer session and any intersessions.

12. QUESTION: DO YOU MEASURE A STUDENT’S PROGRESS TOWARD THEIR GOAL EVERY TERM, OR DO YOU MEASURE ANNUALLY?

Answer: Pace is measured every term, all at the same time, for all Completion Grant participants. For the determination of pace, you can assume attendance for primary terms but not intersessions or summer. Once enrolled for intersessions or summer, you may add those units to determine whether the student is on pace.

13. QUESTION: CAN ESL COURSES BE CONSIDERED “BASIC SKILLS” COURSES FOR THE COMPLETION GRANT PROGRAM?

Answer: Only for-credit ESL courses can be considered Basic Skills and the student must be receiving FTSSG and be on-pace, considering the additional ESL courses.

14. QUESTION: HOW LONG CAN THE COMPLETION GRANT BE EXTENDED TO ACCOMMODATE A STUDENT NEEDING ESL COURSES?

Answer: Students requiring Basic Skills, which includes for-credit ESL coursework, may receive up to an additional year of the Completion Grant. Again, the student must be receiving FTSSG for those same terms.

Pace

15. QUESTION: A STUDENT MUST HAVE AN SEP TO PARTICIPATE IN THE PROGRAM. DOES THIS MEAN AN ABBREVIATED SEP OR COMPREHENSIVE SEP?

Answer: Due to the intent to have the student be on pace to obtaining a degree within the two-year or three-year period, the college is required to provide the student a Comprehensive SEP prior to disbursing any Completion Grant funds. A college could package the Completion Grant for students without a Comprehensive SEP but the payment could not be disbursed until the Comprehensive SEP is completed indicating the appropriate number of units to keep on pace to complete.

16. QUESTION: IF A STUDENT IS OVER MAXIMUM UNIT TIME FRAME, COMPLETES AN APPEAL AND IS APPROVED FOR THIS SEMESTER AND IS NOW ELIGIBLE FOR PELL, CAL GRANT AND FTSSG WITH 15 ENROLLED UNITS, WOULD THE STUDENT BE ELIGIBLE FOR CCCG FOR THIS SEMESTER?

Answer: There is no appeal authority in the CCCG law. However, if the student is meeting their original pace established when they entered the program, then payment could be made. The student's original pace, as established when they entered the program, must be maintained.

17. QUESTION: FOR CONTINUING STUDENTS, IS THE ORIGINAL PACE DETERMINED BY UNITS ATTEMPTED OR UNITS EARNED?

Answer: Pace is established at the time the student is first paid in the program. The comprehensive SEP issued would take into consideration units earned as of that time.

18. QUESTION: IS THE STUDENT REQUIRED TO BE ENROLLED IN THE EXACT COURSES ON THEIR SEP OR JUST HAVE A COMPREHENSIVE SEP COMPLETED?

Answer: A student might be able to take some coursework that is on not on their SEP and yet still be on pace. An example would be a student taking 18 units per semester with 15 units applicable towards their degree.

19. QUESTION: WHAT DOES "THE STUDENT MAINTAINS A GRADE POINT AVERAGE OF AT LEAST 2.0..." MEAN?

Answer: The law requires Completion Grant participants to have a cumulative GPA of at least 2.0. It should not be automatically interpreted as having a 2.0 GPA for all terms. This is because the current satisfactory academic progress requirements for financial aid programs, including the Cal Grant program, are sufficient determination of meeting the academic standard. Since all Completion Grant participants will be receiving FTSSG, which requires simultaneous payment of Cal Grant, if you pay them FTSSG, you are certifying that they meet the academic standard.

20. QUESTION: IF A STUDENT IS AWARDED CAL GRANT AND FTSSG BASED ON A SAP GPA APPEAL APPROVAL BUT THEIR CUMULATIVE GPA IS BELOW 2.0, ARE THEY DISQUALIFIED FROM CCCG?

Answer: Even though the SAP GPA appeal was approved, there is no such appeal authority in the CCCG law. Since the student's cumulative GPA is still below 2.0, they are not eligible.

21. QUESTION: IS THERE AN APPEAL PROCESS IF THEY LOSE ELIGIBILITY?

Answer: There is no formal appeal process. If a student falls off their original pace, they have lost eligibility for the Completion Grant unless their original pace is reestablished. Original pace could be reestablished by taking intersession or summer units. Remember that students meeting the requirements of other financial aid programs may continue to receive benefits in those other programs. For example, the student may still be eligible for FTSSG, Cal Grant, Pell, etc.

22. QUESTION: WHAT IF A STUDENT HAS TO STOP-OUT FOR A TERM, THEN CONTINUES THE FOLLOWING TERM? ARE THEY STILL ON TRACK?

Answer: Yes. A student previously on-pace for the Completion Grant who does not enroll for a term, or who enrolls for a term and then drops all units before census, will still be considered on-pace for the Completion Grant program if they resume pace with the following term. However, any student who enrolls then drops units after census will be held to their original timeframe for completion.

23. QUESTION: STUDENTS WILL BE STARTING THEIR PROGRAMS WITH A DIFFERENT NUMBER OF UNITS. HOW DO WE DETERMINE HOW MANY TERMS THEY CAN RECEIVE PAYMENT?

Answer: A college will determine each student's timeframe towards completion from the student's Comprehensive SEP and determine whether the student is on-pace towards completing within the timeframe. Since students must be receiving FTSSG, there may be some students who, at the end of their program, will not attend at the required 12 unit full-time status required for FTSSG and hence not be eligible for a Completion Grant for that term.

24. QUESTION: WHAT IF THE STUDENT CHANGES MAJORS? DOES THIS RESTART THE CLOCK?

Answer: A student's original timeframe towards completion is established when they enter the program.

A student who has already received Completion Grant payments and then changes majors might still be able to keep on pace, or they may not. The student should be encouraged to meet with a counselor to try and map out a plan to complete their degree requirements within their original timeframe, taking into account coursework already completed. However, some students who change majors may not be able to continue to receive benefits.

25. QUESTION: CAN BOTH CAL GRANT B AND C PARTICIPANTS RECEIVE A COMPLETION GRANT?

Answer: Yes, if the student is receiving FTSSG.

26. QUESTION: ARE AB 540 DREAMERS ELIGIBLE?

Answer: Yes, if receiving FTSSG.

27. QUESTION: CAN WE INCLUDE UNITS EARNED AT ANOTHER COLLEGE IF A CONSORTIUM IS IN PLACE TOWARDS STAYING ON PACE AND MAKING PAYMENT?

Answer: Yes. Units from another college, where a consortium is in place, may be used to count towards the completion pace and for the required minimum 12 units for a term.

28. QUESTION: WHAT ABOUT STUDENTS IN CTE PROGRAMS? WE HAVE A 24-UNIT CERTIFICATE PROGRAM AND THE STUDENT MIGHT TAKE ONLY 12 UNITS PER TERM? CAN THEY BE PAID?

Answer: Only if they are receiving the FTSSG and the student is on-pace to complete within the published timeframe for the program.

29. QUESTION: IF THEY HAVE USED UP THEIR CAL GRANT ELIGIBILITY, DO THEY LOSE COMPLETION GRANT ELIGIBILITY?

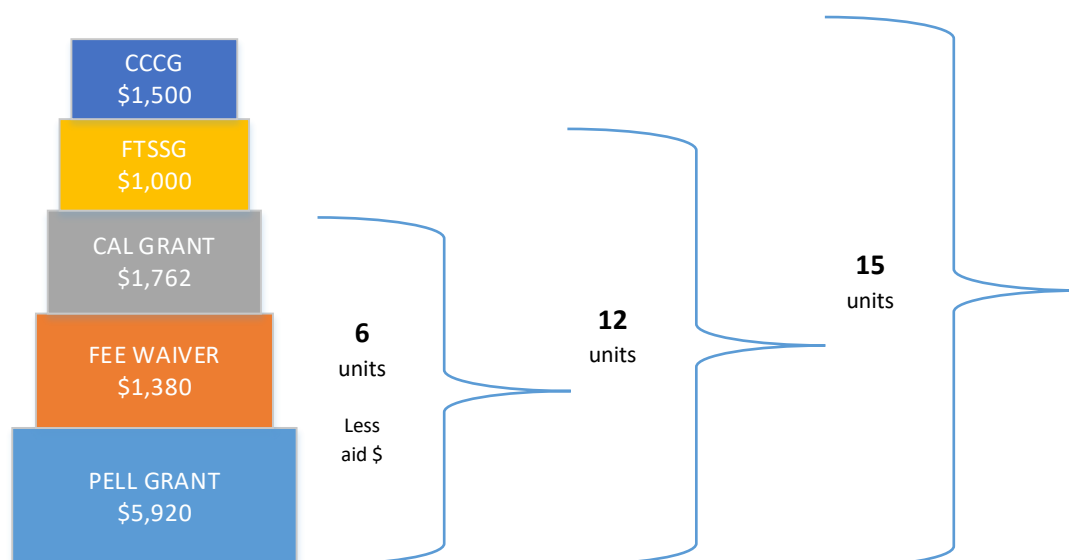
Answer: Yes, they must be receiving FTSSG which requires a same-term Cal Grant payment.

30. QUESTION: DO WE REDUCE AN UNSUBSIDIZED LOAN SO AS TO NOT OVER AWARD?

Answer: Yes, you must reduce something so the student is not over awarded and a loan should always be awarded last. In a case where the student did not have a loan and would be over awarded if paid the full Completion Grant, it would be allowable to reduce the Completion Grant to less than the full award.

31. QUESTION: WHERE DOES THE COMPLETION GRANT FALL IN THE GRANT HIERARCHY? DOES IT COME AFTER ALL OTHER GRANTS?

Answer: Yes. The Completion Grant is considered stackable grant funding and cannot supplant any other grant funding the student is receiving. It is awarded before any self-help aid such as work-study or loans. Any self-help aid should be reduced or refunded if the student is over awarded.



32. QUESTION: CURRENTLY WE DO NOT FUND STUDENTS WHO INDICATE CSU CERTIFICATE OR IGETC CERTIFICATE; CAN THE COMPLETION GRANT BE PAID FOR STUDENTS IN THOSE PROGRAMS?

Answer: If the student is not receiving Cal Grant and FTSSG, they cannot be paid a Completion Grant.

33. QUESTION: DOES A STUDENT REQUIRED TO TAKE ONLY A FEW BASIC SKILLS OR ESL COURSES GET A FULL ADDITIONAL YEAR OF GRANT ELIGIBILITY?

Answer: No. A student is required to be on-pace to complete on-time considering the extra basic skills units. For example, a student needing just 6 units of basic skills coursework could receive an extra semester of Completion Grant eligibility. Those needing more than a semester of Basic Skills or for credit ESL coursework could receive an extra a full year of the Completion Grant.

Especially critical for these students is their need for guidance on what is required of them to get and stay on track. Colleges should work with students to ensure that students receive an SEP and follow it.

Also, as for every primary term, the student must be receiving FTSSG to get the CCCG.

34. QUESTION: WHAT IF A STUDENT TAKES AN EQUIVALENT COURSE NOT LISTED ON HIS/HER SEP (SEP) BECAUSE THE ORIGINAL CLASS IS FULL OR CANCELLED?

Answer: If the course is an equivalent and the student will remain in pace, it is up to you to approve. You will have to get a revised SEP or something in writing from counseling indicating the approved change.