1. Introduction to Federal Student Aid

Introduces the basic concepts and specialized language of federal student aid (FSA), describes the history and background of the programs, and identifies the information resources available to financial aid personnel and the public.

FSA Concepts

Presents basic terminology used in federal student financial aid management.

Purpose, History, and Principles of FSA

Cites reasons for enacting postsecondary federal student assistance, milestones in developing FSA programs, and principles underlying FSA law and regulations.

Sources of Postsecondary FSA

Briefly describes Title IV FSA programs and other federal and nonfederal student aid sources.

How Laws, Regulations, and Policies are Made

Outlines steps in developing federal laws, regulations, and policies; identifies sources of information about pending and existing rules; tells how Financial Aid Administrators can participate in the FSA policy-making process.

FSA Information Resources

Lists printed, electronic, and phone support systems for schools, students, and other FSA participants.

Using FSA Regulations and Manuals

Illustrates how to find information in Title IV FSA regulations and the FSA Handbook.

2. The FSA Ecosystem

Provides an overview of who does what in FSA and the processes involved.

Roles and Responsibilities

Summarizes activities of major participants in the financial aid field: students and families, schools, sponsoring agencies, and other organizations.
FSA Calendars and Flow Charts

Shows when and how major FSA processes are carried out during the Title IV award year; serves as an introduction to more detailed descriptions of the processes in other lessons.

3. Student/Family Responsibilities

Shows how schools and the U.S. Department of Education help students and their families gather information and make sound choices about their investment in postsecondary education.

Selecting a School

Prepares an FAA to counsel students and families about researching education quality, academic requirements, available financial aid, and application procedures at postsecondary schools.

Applying for Federal Student Aid

Describes the Free Federal Application for Student Aid (FAFSA): Explains how the FAFSA is used, as well as filing methods, deadlines, and the source documents needed. This lesson also explains how to complete the FAFSA, and advises on record maintenance for the student and/or parent.

4. School Responsibilities: Communication

Describes the lines of communication that must exist among offices within the school and with outside organizations, as well as the information that schools must provide to students.

Internal and External Communications

Identifies other school offices and outside organizations that a school’s financial aid office must communicate with, and explains the purpose of these communications.

Student Consumer Information

Describes types of information that schools must provide to current and prospective students and methods for delivering the information.

Loan Counseling Requirements

Describes loan counseling requirements for Perkins, Direct Loan, and FFEL borrowers, and suggests issues to consider when setting up counseling systems.

5. School Responsibilities: Awarding Aid

Shows how schools set up their operating systems and policies they must have in place before awarding federal financial aid.

Constructing Student Expense Budgets

Lists Title IV rules for establishing students’ cost of attendance; discusses school responsibilities and choices
in designing standard budgets for different categories of students.

**Estimating Funds Available for Awards**

Illustrates Campus-based program procedures for calculating the amount of money available for awards, matching-fund contributions from the school, and administrative cost allowance; lists possible assistance for schools when estimating the funds available from other financial aid programs.

**Packaging Policies**

Identifies Title IV packaging rules, decisions schools must make when establishing policies, and commonly used financial aid packaging models.

**Satisfactory Academic Progress Policies**

Explains federal guidelines for qualitative and quantitative satisfactory academic progress (SAP) standards; methods and time periods for checking progress; and required policies for probation, appeals, and re-establishing Title IV eligibility.

**Managing the FSA Application Process**

Traces the steps required and documentation that must be retained as a financial aid office handles the Title IV application process, from FSA application announcement through ED processing to school reporting to ED on application-related data.

6. **School Responsibilities: Fiscal and Records Management**

Describes a school's responsibilities for managing and reporting on the use of federal Title IV funds and for maintaining records.

**Cash Management: Receiving and Disbursing Funds**

Describes required procedures for obtaining Title IV funds from ED and FFEL lenders, keeping funds in bank accounts, paying funds to students, and returning unused funds to ED or lenders.

**Recordkeeping Requirements**

Enumerates records that schools must retain to document school and program eligibility, student eligibility, and administration of the Pell Grant, campus-based Direct Loan, and FFEL programs; outlines rules on storage format options, time periods for retaining records, and disclosing student data.

**Reporting Requirements**

Identifies and briefly describes reports schools must complete for Pell Grants, ACGs, National Smart Grants, Campus-Based Programs, Direct Loans, FFEL Program loans, ED's financial management system, NSLDS, and other databases.

**Managing Student Employment Programs**

Outlines school and employer obligations and student eligibility criteria for the Federal Work-Study (FWS)
Program and the Job Location and Development (JLD) Program.

7. Determining a Student's Eligibility for FSA

Describes the functions a school must perform in determining students' eligibility before awarding them federal student aid.

Federal Need Analysis

Introduces the statutory formulas used to calculate a student's expected family contribution (EFC), the processing steps carried out by ED, and the FAA's use of professional judgment in adjusting EFC-related data.

Using SARs and ISIRs

Traces procedures for getting EFC figures from an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) and a Student Aid Report (SAR), making any needed corrections and recalculations, and applying professional judgment where needed to change EFC-related data.

How to Verify Student Application Data

Describes how student applications are selected for verification and how schools complete the process of document-checking and making any required data changes and recalculations.

Figuring Cost of Attendance and Financial Need

Shows how a school applies the federal formula of COA-EFC=NEED and its own established cost of attendance policies to determine financial need for individual students; mentions conditions that might call for use of professional judgment in establishing a student's COA or EFC.

Packaging a Student's FSA Awards

Case studies show how the FAA checks to make sure that a student meets general and program-specific eligibility criteria for Title IV awards the school would like to include in the student's financial aid package.

Calculating a Federal Pell Grant Award

Introduces formulas used to calculate the Federal Pell Grant cost of attendance; illustrates use of the Pell Grant Payment and Disbursement Schedules; shows how a school sets Pell payment periods and payment amounts.

Awarding Federal Direct Loans and FFELs

Shows how to calculate loan amounts for Federal Direct Loans and FFELs and describes what students, parents, and schools must do in the loan application process.

ACG and National SMART Grants

Introduces two new grant programs created by the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 (HERA) and gives the basic qualifying criteria to receive them.
8. School Responsibilities: Enrolled and Former Students

Describes correct procedures for disbursing federal financial aid funds to students and handling fund returns for students who do not complete a payment period or period of enrollment, as well as schools’ continuing responsibilities for former students.

Checking Enrollment Status, Academic Progress, and Loan Limits

Shows how a school must check a student's enrollment status, academic eligibility, and outstanding loan amounts before setting award amounts and disbursing funds for a payment period.

Making Title IV Awards and Payments to Continuing Students

Describes procedures for determining award amounts and payment dates, and discusses rules for disbursing payments to students in term-based and nonterm programs.

Treatment of Title IV Funds When a Student Withdraws

Shows what financial aid administrators do when a student who was awarded and disbursed (or could have been disbursed) Title IV aid doesn't complete a payment period or period of enrollment.

Collecting Title IV Loans

Outlines loan collection functions performed by schools for the Federal Perkins Loan Program and data management tasks schools must complete for the Direct Loan and FFEL Programs.

Reporting a Student's Financial Aid History

Describes the functions and contents of the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) and schools' responsibilities for providing data; tells how NSLDS data are used to monitor student eligibility and check the financial aid history of transfer students.

9. Evaluation of Title IV Program Management

Shows how ED evaluates a school's capability to properly administer Title IV funds before approving it to participate in the programs; describes the audits and reviews used to check the school's continuing eligibility to participate.

Certification to Participate in Title IV Programs

Outlines Title IV school and program eligibility standards; describes steps schools must follow for initial certification and recertification; identifies conditions that may affect a school's eligibility to participate in Title IV student aid programs.

Audits, Reviews, and Self-Evaluation

Describes the purpose and features of audits, ED program reviews, FFEL guaranty agency reviews, accrediting agency reviews; identifies tools schools can use for internal self-evaluation.