OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

District of Columbia Tuition Assistance Grant (DCTAG) Frequently Asked Questions

DCTAG Terms

Academic year: Annual period during which a student attends and receives formal instruction at a college or university; typically, from August or September to May or June.

Accredited: Official recognition that a college or university meets the standards of a regional or national accreditation association.

Credits: Units that a school uses to indicate that a student has completed and passed courses that are required for a degree.

Notarized: Notarization is the official fraud-deterrent process that assures the parties of a transaction that a document is authentic and can be trusted. It is a three-part process, performed by a Notary Public, that includes of vetting, certifying and record-keeping.

Student Aid Index (SAI): The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)-calculated numbers that determine Federal Student Aid (FSA) eligibility that was formerly known as Estimated Family Contribution (EFC).

FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS): The official FAFSA results formerly known as the Student Aid Report (SAR).

Domicile: The city, state, or country that a person treats as their permanent home. This is based on provided documentation to show proof of this claim.

Rejected Documents: Incorrect documents that have been uploaded and need to be reviewed. After review, correct documents must be provided as one upload.

Disbursement: A payment of money, especially one made by DCTAG for an eligible student at a college or university.

Correspondence: Communication by exchanging letters, emails, or other messages.

Deadline: A date or time before which the completion of the DCTAG application process must be done.

Social Security Income: Referred to as SSI throughout DCTAG documents.

DCTAG Website & Application Navigation

Question: What is the DC OneApp?
Answer: The DC OneApp is the website that hosts the DCTAG application.

Question: Does DCTAG work on every browser?
Answer: No, you must use Google Chrome when applying for DCTAG.

Question: I am applying for DCTAG. Do I 'register' or 'log in'?
Answer: If you are a new applicant, you will need to register when applying for DCTAG. If you are a returning applicant, please log in with your username and password for DCTAG/DC OneApp access.

Question: What is the purpose of the DC OneApp Guide on the homepage?
Answer: The DC OneApp guide shows screenshots of DC OneApp features. This tab on the homepage gives student applicants a chance to preview the application process and prepare for documents submission.

Question: Will there be a waitlist after the DCTAG deadline?
Answer: No, there will not be a waitlist after the deadline.

Question: Do I need to submit a new DCTAG application every year?
Answer: Yes, a new DCTAG application must be submitted and completed every year to be considered for the DCTAG grant. Successful completion of an application and submission of supporting documents are considered a completed application.

DCTAG Supporting Documents

Question: I uploaded my supporting documents, and I was rejected by my DCTAG advisor. What are my next steps?
Answer: Review the rejection letter either through your email or by logging back in to the DC OneApp portal and clicking on the correspondence tab. Once you have read the rejection letter and the issue with the supporting documents, make the necessary corrections, and submit all supporting documents again for review.

Question: My parent is a tax filer. What tax document should I provide?
Answer: Based on the checklist, you should upload and provide one of the following options: an uncertified signed and dated D-40 tax return from your parent, a certified stamped D-40 tax return from the Office of Tax and Revenue (OTR) or click on the D-40 Authorization tab within the DC OneApp portal to electronically verify your parent's tax return.

Question: Since I have a filed electronic copy of my D-40 tax return, do I have to sign and date the document?
Answer: Yes, a signature and date are required on the filed electronic copy of the D-40 tax return.

Question: Does DCTAG accept the 1040 tax return? What is the difference between the 1040 and the D-40 tax return.
Answer: No, DCTAG does not accept the 1040 tax return. The 1040 tax return is a federal tax return. The D-40 tax return is the District of Columbia tax form that is used to verify your residency and eligibility for DCTAG.

Question: How do you know if your attempt at using the D-40 Authorization tab was successful?
Answer: Your first attempt after completing the D-40 Authorization tab will show an immediate response. However, if you require another attempt to verify the taxes, your response will take up to 24 hours.

Question: What if my attempt of using the D-40 Authorization tab was unsuccessful?
Answer: You will need to provide either your uncertified signed and dated copy of the D-40 tax return or certified stamped D-40 tax return.

Question: I filed an extension for last year's taxes. What can I do to satisfy the requirement for DCTAG tax submission?
Answer: Your parent/legal guardian will need to provide a signed and dated District of Columbia tax extension FR-127 form along with a signed and dated copy of their previous year's D-40 taxes, and this will satisfy the D-40 tax requirement. However, a copy of the D-40 tax return for which an extension was granted will be required with next year's DCTAG application.
**In some cases, a certified copy of the D-40 tax return will be required.*

Question: I have uploaded a Social Security Statement reflecting one month on the statement with all my required supporting documents and was advised by DCTAG that I needed a 12-month Social Security Statement. Why?
Answer: A Social Security Statement that covers only one month is not sufficient; the Social Security document must include 12 months of continuous benefits for the previous calendar year (January-December) or the 1099 Social Security Statement for the previous year.

Question: My parent/guardian(s) has no income and does not file taxes. What other sources of documentation are acceptable?
Answer: Please review the DCTAG checklist for other domicile options and/or contact your assigned DCTAG advisor to discuss acceptable sources of income documentation.

Question: My parent/guardian(s) does not have any utility bill in their name because my parent/guardian(s) live with a relative. What do I provide for a utility bill?
Answer: You may provide a Notarized Statement from your relative stating that your parent/guardian(s) lives with the relative and a copy of one current utility bill, cable, internet, or phone bill (DCTAG will not accept a cell phone bill) less than 45 days old reflecting your relative's name and address. The Notarized Statement will be accepted only after a Notary Public signs and stamps the statement.

Question: My parents are not around, and I live with another relative. Can I use my relative's D-40 tax return to apply for DCTAG?
Answer: No, you must use your parent/legal guardian's D-40 tax return to apply for DCTAG.

Question: My parents are not in my life, and I live with my relative. Can my relative make me eligible for DCTAG?
Answer: Only if your relative is a District of Columbia resident, your legal guardian through the court system, and provides court documentation along with other required supporting documents.

Question: My parent receives TANF/SNAP. What should I provide?
Answer: Individuals who receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or "Food Stamps") can request for DCTAG to verify receipt of TANF or SNAP benefits with the District's Department of Human Services (DHS).

DCTAG uses this information solely for the purpose of District residency verification to determine DCTAG eligibility. If you would like to request DCTAG to pull your TANF/SNAP benefits, **please download this form**.

OSSE-DHS Release of Information PDF Document

Once you have completed the form, please upload it to the DC OneApp portal by clicking on "Upload Documents." A review of the document by DCTAG staff is needed to be deemed successful. The TANF/SNAP Authorization Request form must be completed by a parent and by a witness. Anyone over the age of 18 can serve as a witness.

Question: What documentation is needed for applicants who graduated high school more than three years ago?
See supporting documentation checklist. If you have additional questions, please call the DCTAG Office at (202) 727-2824.

Award Letter

Question: I have been deemed eligible for DCTAG. Where do I find my award letter?
Answer: Congratulations! Log back in to your DCTAG DC OneApp portal and click on the Correspondence tab to find your award letter.

Question: I have received my award letter, but it has the wrong university listed. How do I change my college/university?
Answer: Log in to your DCTAG DC OneApp portal and click on the college/university transfer tab. Once your transfer has been made a new award letter will be issued. Take the new award letter to the school you are now attending.

Question: I received my award letter. What are my next steps?
Answer: Be sure to read the entire award letter and provide the award letter to your college/university's financial aid office.

Question: I have given my financial aid office my award letter. When will my college/university receive my DCTAG funds?
Answer: First an invoice should be sent to the DCTAG office electronically so that the payment process can begin. Once the invoice has been sent to DCTAG it will take up to 30 business days to process and reach the university.

Institution

Question: How do I find out if the colleges and universities I am considering are eligible to receive DCTAG?
Answer: To learn if the institution(s) you are considering are eligible to participate in DCTAG, visit www.osse.dc.gov and follow the link to "Postsecondary Education." Choose the grant(s) you believe you are eligible for and click on that grant(s) "Eligible Institutions" link.

Question: My college/university is threatening to drop my classes because they did not receive DCTAG funds. Can they do that?
Answer: The DCTAG Participation Agreement signed by the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) and a participating institution state that if a student is eligible for DCTAG funding, the institution must consider the funding amount when determining a student's balance due. An eligible student will not be held liable for forthcoming DCTAG funds.
If the **only** outstanding balance on a student's account is forthcoming DCTAG funds, an institution cannot drop that student's classes.
**Note: Balances due beyond DCTAG funds are the student's responsibility and an institution has the discretion to treat that balance due in accordance with its rules and regulations.*

Question: My college/university is not on the eligible list. What do I do?
Answer: Research to ensure that your college/university is a public, private local (DC) university or a private Historically Black College or University (HBCU).
*DCTAG cannot provide funding for private colleges/universities and proprietary institutions.

Question: Can DCTAG funds be used to attend the University of the District of Columbia?
Answer: DCTAG cannot be used at the University of the District of Columbia (UDC). District students are already paying in-state tuition at UDC.
**Note: For additional scholarships and grants information please review the OSSE website.*

Question: My university has never received DCTAG, but my university appears to meet the eligibility criteria. What should I do next?
Answer: Provide DCTAG's office with a point of contact (name and email address) from the financial aid office at your university. Once DCTAG has received university contact information, DCTAG's PPA will be sent to the university for signatures of participation and legal documentation to begin the process to participate in the DCTAG program. For more information, please contact Melanie Fleming at (202) 741-6406 or Melanie.Fleming@dc.gov

**Note: College/university must volunteer to participate in the DCTAG program.*

Question: Does DCTAG provide refunds at the college/university I attend?
Answer: Refunds are not based on receiving DCTAG money, as all DCTAG funds are for tuition. However, the timing may impact when your refund from other sources of aid may be distributed. Please note that schools receiving DCTAG on behalf of eligible students agree not to charge students late fees, deny students access to classes, library, housing, other institutional facilities based on the timing of DCTAG's payment. Even if you do not receive a refund, the timing of DCTAG should not affect your enrollment. Please contact your college or university's bursar's office or financial aid office to ask about their process for calculating and issuing refunds if you are a student who believes you should receive a refund check based on your total financial aid package.

Question: If a school classifies a student as an in-state student, is the student still eligible to receive DCTAG funding?
Answer: No, a student may not receive in-state tuition and DCTAG. DCTAG pays only the difference between in-state and out-of-state tuition.

FAFSA

Question: I am not applying for any federal loans or grants. Why do I have to complete the FAFSA and submit a FAFSA Submission Summary?
Answer: DCTAG is a federally funded program; therefore, to ensure compliance with federal eligibility requirements, such as citizenship, valid Social Security Numbers, and student loan default status, OSSE requires all applicants complete the FAFSA and provide a valid FAFSA Submission Summary.

Question: I have completed my FAFSA and was selected for verification. If I do not complete the verification process, am I still eligible to complete DCTAG?
Answer: Students who complete a FAFSA but do not complete the verification process are not eligible for DCTAG funding.

Question: I am having difficulties with my Federal Student Aid 'FSA' ID. How can I get help?
Answer: Please visit studentaid.gov if you are having difficulties with your FSA ID. The login page will have links that give you the option of retrieving your FSA ID through your verified email address or by successfully answering your challenge questions.

Question: My Student Aid Index (SAI) has a 'C' after the figure. Why is this? What can I do?
Answer: A "C" after your SAI figure is a flag informing you that a correction and/or clarification is required. Your FAFSA will provide an explanation of the correction(s) needed under the section titled, "Corrections That Need to Be Made." You must make the correction(s) and/or provide the clarification to FAFSA either online or by contacting FAFSA at 800-433-3243. Until the "C" Flag has been resolved, it is not a valid FAFSA Submission Summary.

Question: Does my SAI number impact how much funding I will receive from the DCTAG?
Answer: Your SAI figure has no impact on your award priority or funding for DCTAG, as DCTAG is not a need-based grant. The SAI is part of the process to determine how much federal or institutional assistance you will receive from your college or university.

Question: How is my SAI number calculated?
Answer: The US Department of Education uses the information included in the FAFSA to determine the SAI. For more information, please contact FAFSA at 800-433-3243 or visit the US Department of Education's website, which is studentaid.gov.

Study Abroad

Question: If I am a student at an approved college/university and I am planning to study outside the US for one semester, will I receive DCTAG funds for that semester?
Answer: To learn if the institution(s) you are considering are eligible to participate in DCTAG, visit www.osse.dc.gov and follow the link to "Postsecondary Education." Choose the grant(s) you believe you are eligible for and click on that grant(s) "Eligible Institutions" link.

Study-abroad programs are ineligible for DCTAG funding. Colleges/universities are ineligible for one or more of the listed reasons below:

1. The program is at another college or university and the tuition costs are paid to that college or university rather than the home college or university.
2. The credits earned must be transferred back to the home college or university.
3. The student is not considered as being enrolled at the home college or university but considered a student at the study abroad university instead.
4. If at the home institution, most study-abroad programs have a flat tuition rate. There is no out-of-state tuition charge. All students pay the same tuition cost regardless of their residency.

Question: Are study abroad programs eligible for DCTAG funding?
Answer: Study abroad programs are not eligible for DCTAG funding.