



Financial Aid Policies

Financial Aid Application Process:

The Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center participates in U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Title IV funding programs. Our participation is in compliance with the latest Higher Education Reauthorization Act for Title IV eligibility and certification requirements. Students in long-term programs are eligible for funding. Students in programs consisting of less than 900 hours may be eligible to apply for a reduced amount of financial aid.

Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) may be completed on-line at www.fafsa.ed.gov. Completion of this form is the first step in the application process to apply for financial aid. Students will be notified of any approved funding. There is no financial cost to complete the FAFSA form.

Once the FAFSA, the next step to obtain federal student loans is to complete **Entrance Counseling** and sign a **Master Promissory Note**. Both can be done on <https://studentloans.gov>.

The financial aid officer will be available to meet with students and parents during the day and evening hours by appointment. The telephone number of the financial aid officer is 814-505-1257 and by e-mail nathan.lavery@gactc.edu.

To be eligible to receive federal student aid, you must:

- Be a citizen or eligible noncitizen of the United States.
- Have a valid Social Security Number. (Students from the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and the Republic of Palau are exempt from this requirement.)
- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, or have completed homeschooling. If you don't, you may still be eligible for federal student aid if you were enrolled in college or career school prior to July 1, 2012. Go to <https://studentaid.ed.gov/eligibility/basic-criteria> for additional information.
- Be enrolled in an eligible program as a regular student seeking a degree or certificate.
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress.
- Not owe a refund on a federal student grant or be in default on a federal student loan.
- Register (or already be registered) with the Selective Service System, if you are a male and not currently on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces. (Students from the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands and the Republic of Palau are exempt from registering; see <https://sss.gov> for more information.)
- Not have a conviction for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred while you were receiving federal student aid (such as grants, work-study, or loans). If you have such a conviction, you must complete the Student Aid Eligibility Worksheet to determine if you are eligible for aid or partially eligible for aid.

Many types of federal student aid, such as the Federal Pell Grant or subsidized loans where the government pays the interest while you are in college, also require you to have financial need. Additionally, once you have a bachelor's degree or a first professional degree, you are generally not eligible for a Pell Grant.

Source: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/help.htm>

Pell Grant:

This award made by the Federal Government is for students in undergraduate study. Students complete an application and eligibility is determined by the Department of Education. Title IV Institution Code: **015272**

Federal Direct Loans:

These are low-interest loans for students and parents to help pay for the cost of a student's education after high school. The lender is the U. S. Department of Education, through the entity you deal with, your loan servicer, can be a private business.

Entrance Counseling for Loan Recipients:

Prior to receiving Direct Loan disbursements, students will be given information instructing them to complete an on-line entrance counseling session if they are interested in participating in the Direct Loan Program.

The Financial Aid Officer will explain the student's responsibilities of loan repayment and answer any questions students may have regarding their future loan payments, as well as, the loan disbursement process-refunds, application to account, etc.

The student will be informed that an Exit Counseling session shall be required when the student leaves the institution.

Exit Counseling:

Prior to the end of the enrollment period, students will be required to complete Exit Counseling online at www.studentloans.gov.

Exit Counseling will remind students of their repayment responsibilities, and inform the student of what to do should they not be able to make their payment. Students are informed of undesirable consequences that students may encounter if the loan goes into default for non-payment. Students will be informed that payment will begin within 6 months after the withdrawal date and/or graduation or when a student drops below half-time attendance. Students will be informed of their right to pursue problem resolution via the ombudsman procedure.

The Financial Aid Officer will answer all questions presented at that time by the students.

Verification Policy:

Verification documentation will be governed by the annually-published Verification Guide. It may be necessary for students who apply for PELL grants and/or Direct Loans to complete a verification process as stipulated by the U.S. Department of Education. Verification requires documentation to be submitted to the school to check the accuracy of the information provided on the financial aid application. Applications selected by the Central Processing System are those used for the verification process. The school does, however, reserve the right to verify information on other applicants as needed to resolve conflicts.

Documentation may include submitting a required verification worksheet, official copies of IRS transcripts of the student's and/or parent's tax returns or linked to IRS through the FAFSA, W-2 forms, current bank statements, Social Security benefits statements, child support payment records, welfare assistance statements, veterans benefits, records of investments, and statements from other agencies.

The Financial Aid Officer will request students to produce all required documentation prior to final certification of Pell Grant or Direct Loan eligibility. Information must be obtained and presented to the Financial Aid Officer in a timely manner after it is requested. Although the school does not set a specific deadline for the applicant to supply the information, the school reserves the right to ask for a tuition payment if paperwork is not completed by the start of school. Generally the student is asked to correct information in the same manner in which it was originally submitted; however, in some instances the financial aid office will submit the corrections electronically. The Greater Altoona Career & Technology Center reserves the right to reduce or cancel an award in cases where there is conflicting or missing information. Should an award change between preliminary verification and final verification, the student would receive a corrected award notification. If an overpayment occurred, the excess amount would be returned to the lender or Department of Education (Pell) by the school, and the student would be notified of amounts owed to the school as a result of the return of the overpayment. Additional information and verification worksheets are available in the Financial Aid Office. The annually published *Verification Guide* will govern verification documentation.

Although the process of determining a student's eligibility for Federal aid is basically the same for all applicants, there is some flexibility. If a student feels that he/she has unusual circumstances, which may affect aid eligibility, he/she should consult the Financial Aid Officer at the Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center. There must be very good reasons for the Financial Aid Officer to make any adjustments. Adjustments may be made only after adequate proof is presented to support those adjustments.

Professional Judgement:

Authorized financial aid officers, due to unusual circumstances of financial aid applicants, may implement professional judgment at this institution.

Professional judgment will be applied on an individual case-by-case basis and will be considered for applicants who may:

1. Be dislocated workers.
2. Have incurred unusually high medical and/or dental expenses and can provide proof of expenses includes documentation on insurance reimbursement received which did not cover entire costs.
3. Have suffered a loss of a substantial portion of their base year income.
4. Veterans who can provide a valid DD-214 to prove honorable discharge. (Dishonorable discharges are excluded from professional judgment.)

After careful review of documentation, adjustments will be made when warranted by adjusting particular data elements used in the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) calculation and then submitting the corrections to the Central Processor System (CPS) for recalculation.

The dependency override adjustment will be used only when unusual circumstances make it unreasonable to expect parents to contribute to educational costs.

Documentation used in all adjustments will be maintained in the applicant's financial aid file.

Tuition Policy:

Tuition is determined annually based on the operational cost of each program and on state reimbursement and guidelines. A \$100 non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of enrollment for all students in all programs of study. The fee is not credited to the tuition.

The Intergenerational and Adult program of study consists of a full program year divided into two (2) payment periods. Each payment period is equal to 50% of the scheduled program year. Fees applicable to the first half of the program will also be due. The balance of the tuition and fees will be due when 50% of the program has been completed. (*Note: In circumstances where the student is a self-pay, we will work with them to determine an appropriate payment plan, where tuition is divided into four (4) payment periods. Payments are still due two weeks prior to the beginning of the next quarter. The Practical Nursing and Medical Assisting program of studies consist of a full program year and a prorated program year that is divided into three (3) payment periods. Each payment period is equal to 1/3 of the scheduled program year. Fees applicable to the payment period are also due.

Students receiving Title IV aid may deduct the amount of aid from the tuition and fees owed. Remaining tuition and fees, after aid has been received and applied to the student's account, are the responsibility of the student.

Full tuition payment for each payment period is due by or before two weeks prior to the first day of class for that payment period. If desired, students may prepay for the entire school year prior to beginning the Fall term. Tuition is adjusted accordingly for half-time and advanced placement students.

Students with delinquent accounts over 10 days are subject to suspension from school until the account is paid. For any current or former student, if an account remains delinquent, the school reserves the right to withhold services along with the diploma, transcript of grades or other records of achievement. Any delinquent accounts (unpaid balances) are subject to the collection procedures established by school policy.

A minimum of six to eight weeks processing time is needed for most types of financial aid. Financial assistance is accepted for tuition payments and fees, upon receipt of appropriate written notification of such approval. This must be submitted to the school according to the payment schedule. Students are responsible for paying the difference between what is owed and what is expected to be received in aid when the first half of tuition and fees are due.

Students being funded by outside agencies must have a written contract or official letter of approval from the agency prior to beginning classes. Any fees not funded by the agency, must be paid by the student according to the due dates. Students receiving Veterans benefits will be subject to all policies governing self-paying students.

Students will be notified of any outstanding tuition and fees owed and will receive an updated invoice each time charges and/or payments are made to their account.

Tuition refunds due to early withdrawal or termination will be approved based on both the school's tuition refund policy and the current U.S. Department of Education's Federal Refund Policy.

Graduates of the G.A.C.T.C. secondary programs who enroll in a full-time Adult Program (including Practical Nursing) will receive a \$500 tuition scholarship.

Bad Check Fee:

A \$15.00 fee will be charged for each bad check or other instrument presented by or on behalf of the student and accepted that is not negotiable. The fee and the amount due must be paid in full to continue in the program.

Withdrawal from School:

Students considering withdrawing from a program should schedule an appointment with the Coordinator of Continuing Education and/or Practical Nursing. The student shall be instructed of the options available. If the student decides to withdraw, a written letter needs to be submitted from the student stating the date they will no longer be attending. This letter of intent will be placed in the student file. Students withdrawing from a program may be considered for re-entry. Tuition shall be prorated as of the date of the official notification of withdrawal from the program, or the last day of attendance.

Students are informed that according to current U.S. DOE Return of Funds policy, financial aid eligibility may be reduced for the portion of time attended based on absentee time. Also, depending on re-entry date, a student may or may not be entitled to financial aid for re-entry period.

Students may be terminated from a program involuntarily for violations of school policies. Students who are terminated will be responsible for any account balance owed. Tuition will be pro-rated as of the official date of the termination in accordance with the institution's Withdrawal/Termination and Refund policies.

The student should officially terminate or withdraw from the program in writing. Upon completion of the withdrawal/termination form, any refund due will be calculated according to the last date of attendance.

NOTE: Students who withdraw before program completion may owe tuition or books cost based on the difference between federal aid required to be returned and the school's refund policy.

Calculation of Withdrawal Refunds:

PRACTICAL NURSING:

Refunds are based on payment period costs and are calculated on a prorata basis. One hundred percent (100%) of tuition shall be refunded if a student withdraws prior to the first day of class. After classes begin, refunds will be prorata. Tuition amount retained is rounded up to the nearest 10 percent of completed hours. After greater than 60 percent of the payment period is completed, no refund is given.

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

Refunds are based on payment period costs and are calculated on a prorata basis. One hundred percent (100%) of tuition shall be refunded if a student withdraws prior to the first day of class. After classes begin, refunds will be prorata. Tuition amount retained is calculated based on hours attended in the program for the payment period at the hourly rate cost for the program. Textbooks and tools, certifications received will be added on to the amount due. After greater than 60 percent of the payment period is completed, no refund is given.

The following Refund Policy applies to all post-secondary education programs offered at Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center:

1. If a student leaves the institution during the program, the Financial Aid Officer recalculates the tuition due for the amount of time attended. Total clock hours attended is divided by the total clock hours for the payment period of the program. This will give the percentage of time attended. The Return of Title IV money will be calculated and the amount of Title IV aid earned, if any, that will be applied to the student's account. If a credit balance does occur, the refund will be sent to the student after all refunds to Title IV have been satisfied. If a balance due on the account remains, it will be the student's responsibility to satisfy the balance.
Please note: There will be no refunds or invoices on balances less than \$1.00.
2. Students who have already received Federal Pell grant money may be required to pay a portion of this grant back to the U.S. Department of Education when they withdraw from a program early, if based on the actual hours attended, it is determined that they received more aid than entitled to for that period.
*Student withdrawal may be voluntary or involuntary.

Title IV Return of Funds Policy:

When a student who has received federal Title IV aid funds withdraws early from their program, sometimes aid already received must be returned to its' source depending on the student's eligibility (based on attendance, payment period, number of hours completed, etc.).

The amount of repayment will be determined by using the U.S. Department of Education Return of Refunds calculation worksheet and/or R2T4 Return of Funds software.

The Financial Aid Office is required by federal statute to determine how much financial aid was earned by students who withdraw, drop out, are dismissed, or take a leave of absence prior to completing 60% of a payment period or term. For a student who withdraws after the 60% point-in-time, there are no unearned funds. However, a school must still complete a Return calculation in order to determine whether the student is eligible for a post-withdrawal disbursement.

The calculation is based on the percentage of earned aid using the following Federal Return of Title IV funds formula:

Percentage of payment period or term completed the number of days completed up to the withdrawal date divided by the total days in the payment period or term. (Any break of five days or more is not counted as part of the days in the term.) This percentage is also the percentage of earned aid.

Funds are returned to the appropriate federal program based on the percentage of unearned aid using the following formula:

Aid to be returned = (100% of the aid that could be disbursed minus the percentage of earned aid) multiplied by the total amount of aid that could have been disbursed during the payment period or term.

If a student earned less aid than was disbursed, the institution would be required to return a portion of the funds and the student would be required to return a portion of the funds. Keep in mind that when Title IV funds are returned, the student borrower may owe a debit balance to the institution.

If a student earned more aid than was disbursed to him/her, the institution would owe the student a post-withdrawal disbursement. The school will return any unearned Title IV funds within 45 days of the date the school determined the student withdrew, and offer any Post-withdrawal disbursement of loan funds within 30 days of that date. The school will disburse any Title IV grant funds a student is due as part of a Post-withdrawal within 45 days of the date the school determined the student withdrew, and disburse any loan funds a student accepts within 180 days of that date. If the students' withdrawal creates a situation where the student has received more Title IV aid than eligible for, due to early withdrawal, the appropriate amount of over-awarded funds will be returned within 45 days to the appropriate federal aid source according to federal guidelines in this order:

1. Unsubsidized Federal Direct Loans
2. Subsidized Federal Direct Loans
3. Federal Parent (PLUS) Loans
4. Federal Pell Grants for which a Return of funds is required

The student will be notified of any remaining funds left on account at that point, and if Direct loan money had been received, the student will be given the option of having these excess funds returned to their loan to reduce original loan debt or to have refund of excess funds returned to the student (the funds would then be repaid to the loan servicer as agreed in original loan terms on student's Master Promissory Note.

All information on Program Costs and Refund Policies is made available to all applicants and is distributed prior to day one (1) of enrollment.

Direct Loan Disbursement:

When loan disbursements arrive via Electronic Funds Transfer (EFT) from the Department of Education, the Financial Aid Office will:

1. Notify the students the amount being disbursed and have the students sign an authorization that they still want the money. Monies for each loan period are disbursed in two payments.
2. EFT deposit amount shall be verified with the bank.
3. The Financial Aid Officer will give the Business Office a list of the students who received disbursements by program and a voucher to move the funds from the general bank account into the appropriate program accounts.
4. Post the students loan disbursement to their student accounts within three (3) business days of receiving the disbursement funds through EFT.
5. The Financial Aid Office will check the printout provided by the Business Office of the EFT account activity to be sure amounts are correct.

***Loans are not dispersed until the students complete at least 30 calendar days of class.**

**School policy not reg. (unless default rate goes above 10% - we would have to hold; we wouldn't have a choice.)
Currently the 30 day rule is not a govt. regulation but a school preference, since we lose a number of students in this time period.**

Alternative Loan Refunds:

When Alternative Loans are received, they need to be credited to the students account within three (3) business days after the student endorses them. If the student's balance is paid in full and a refund is due, it must be issued within fourteen (14) calendar days after the student signs the check.

Direct Loan Refunds (EFT):

Direct loan money received from EFT Disbursement must be credited to the account within (3) business days after it is received. If the student's balance is paid in full and a refund is due, it must be issued within fourteen (14) calendar days after the funds were credited to the student's account.

Student Refunds:

When students receive Direct loan monies for living expenses beyond what is credited toward their tuition/books, the Business Office will prepare individual checks.

1. Students will be notified to pick up their checks in the Continuing Education Office and/or Practical Nursing Office.
2. Students will sign a "sign-off" sheet to indicate they have received their refund check, and the amount will be shown.
3. The check number will be recorded on the Disbursement Sheet and a copy of the check may be made for the student's folder.

Excess Funds (Credit Balances) From Student Aid:

If a student has excess funds remaining in his/her account, after applying student aid to his/her balance, the excess funds (credit balance) will be refunded to the student. A student may authorize the Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center, in writing, to hold the excess funds on their account to reduce the balance due on the next scheduled due date. This policy is in compliance with the rules and regulations of Federal Aid.

Pell Refunds:

When Pell monies are received, they need to be credited to the students account within three (3) days. If the student's balance is paid in full and a refund is due, it must be issued within fourteen (14) days after the money has been disbursed.

Academic Year Definitions:

The Greater Altoona Career and Technology Center defines its academic year for each Title IV eligible programs as stated below:

All borrowers in all programs are considered Level I for financial aid purposes, with the exception of LPN and Medical Assistant students who move into Level II for their 2nd academic year as indicated below.

- Administrative Office Specialist: One academic year - equal to 1035 hours (36 weeks)
- Full-time Intergenerational Programs: One academic year – equal to 900 hours (36 weeks)
- HVAC with Related Plumbing & Electrical: One academic year – equal to 900 hours (36 weeks)
- Welding with Print Reading and Math: One academic year – equal to 900 hours (36 weeks)
- Medical Office Specialist: One academic year – equal to 1080 hours (36 weeks)
- Medical Assistant: - Length 1380 hours (48) weeks
 - 1st academic year – equal to 900 hours (35.5 weeks)
 - 2nd academic year – equal to 480 hours (prorated) (12.5 weeks)
- Expanded Function Dental Assistant (EFDA): - Length 1053 hours (46 weeks)
 - 1st academic year – equal to 900 hours (37 weeks)
 - 2nd academic year – equal to 153 hours (prorated) (9 weeks)
- Practical Nursing Program:
 - *Full-Time Program* – Length 1564 hours (51 weeks)
 - 1st academic year - equal to 900 hours (30 weeks)
 - 2nd academic year - equal to 664 hours (prorated) (21 weeks)
 - *Part-Time Program* – Length 1564 hours (102 weeks)
 - 1st academic year - equal to 900 hours (58 weeks)
 - 2nd academic year - equal to 664 hours (prorated) (44 weeks)