

In this issue:

Federal updates	1
Common Forms Updates and Reminders	1
TG updates	2
Lender application of teacher loan forgiveness payments	2
Have you registered yet for Thursday's TG telephone conference?.....	3
Join TG at our upcoming Regional Training events	3
Meet TG's testing loans and certification (TLC) team.....	3
Question of the Week	4
Legislative update	5
This, that, and the other	5

Tip^{of} the Week

Mark your calendars to attend the 2006 TG Annual Conference, to be held April 18 – 20 in Austin, Texas. To learn more about the premier financial aid conference, visit *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/tgconference/index.cfm

Federal updates

Common Forms Updates and Reminders

The Department of Education recently provided guidance on some common forms currently in use.

- Use of the current **Federal Stafford Loan Master Promissory Note** has been extended until the Office of Management and Budget approves the revised form, which is in clearance. The original expiration date of September 30, 2005 was previously extended until December 31, 2005.
- Use of the current **Federal PLUS Master Promissory Note** has been extended until February 28, 2006. The original expiration date is January 31, 2006.
- Use of the current **Total and Permanent Disability form** has been extended until March 31, 2006. The original expiration date was December 31, 2005.
- Use of all current **deferment forms** has been extended until February 28, 2006. The original expiration date was September 30, 2005.

Revised Claim Form

Beginning January 1, 2006, the Taxpayer Relief Act requires lenders to report new data on certain claims. The common claim form has been revised to facilitate this reporting, which includes unpaid origination fees and capitalized interest at the time of claim filing. The information is required for loans first disbursed on or after September 1, 2004.

All forms may be found on TG Online at www.tgslc.org/forms/index.cfm

TG updates

Lender application of teacher loan forgiveness payments

When a borrower applies for loan forgiveness under the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, the guarantor reviews the borrower's application and determines the borrower's eligibility. If the borrower qualifies for forgiveness, the guarantor sends a payment in the amount of forgiveness for which the borrower is eligible to the borrower's lender.

Once the lender has received the forgiveness payment from the guarantor, the lender must apply this payment according to federal regulatory guidance in 34 CFR 682.215(f)(5):

"Unless otherwise instructed by the borrower, the holder must apply the proceeds of the teacher forgiveness discharge first to any outstanding unsubsidized Federal Stafford loan balances, next to any outstanding subsidized Federal Stafford loan balances, then to any eligible outstanding Federal Consolidation loan balances."

By applying the forgiveness payment in this manner, the borrower receives the maximum benefit from the loan forgiveness that he or she has earned, since the borrower's unsubsidized Stafford loan balances are reduced (or eliminated, as the case may be) first.

To ensure that teacher loan forgiveness payments are applied in this manner that best benefits the borrower and complies with the provided regulatory provision, when TG sends a lender a teacher loan forgiveness payment, TG provides an attached letter that details the amount of loan forgiveness approved and the loan(s) to which it should be applied. TG suggests that lenders that receive such payments earmark them for special handling.

If a lender receives a loan forgiveness payment and discovers that the accompanying letter described above has been separated during handling, it can contact TG customer assistance for instructions on how to apply the loan forgiveness payment to the borrower's account.

More information

If you have questions or require more information on the Teacher Loan Forgiveness Program, call TG customer assistance at (800) 845-6267 or send an e-mail message to cust.assist@tgslc.org.

Have you registered yet for Thursday's TG telephone conference?

The teleconference titled *Things that make you go "hmmm..."* will be held on Thursday, December 15, from 2 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. (CST).

The telephone conference will cover a variety of recurring policy issues, including some of the key topics from ED's recent Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) GEN-05-16, titled "Responses to recent, recurring Federal Student Aid questions." Participants are also strongly encouraged to submit their own persistently perplexing policy questions in advance of the event to viola.perez@tgslc.org.

How to register

To register and to get further details, contact Premiere Teleconferencing at (800) 289-0579 and reference confirmation number 8317574. The telephone conference is free of charge and open to participants from any institution. For more information about the event, visit www.tgslc.org/custfocus/teleconf.cfm or contact Viola Perez at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4576, or send an e-mail message to viola.perez@tgslc.org.

Join TG at our upcoming Regional Training events

TG is continuing its Regional Training series of events throughout the upcoming year at a location near you. TG's training experts offer informative sessions on a variety of industry and professional development topics that can help you and your financial aid team grow both personally and professionally. Attendees also will have opportunities to interact with other financial aid professionals.

Training topics include industry-specific sessions on cash management, tax returns in financial aid, AdvanTG Web™ enhancements, and professional development sessions on teamwork.

To find the Regional Training event at the city nearest you and to register today, visit www.tgslc.org/training/regional/index.cfm.

Meet TG's testing loans and certification (TLC) team

TG has enhanced its customer service delivery to offer even more flexibility and service to TG's school and lender partners. In simplifying the organization of TG's customer service teams, the team previously known as customer services — testing and certification (CSTC) is now known as the testing loans and certification (TLC) team.

The TLC team conducts process and product testing with customers and supports the process flows that schools and lenders need to successfully use TG's products and services. TLC tests include TG PLUS Credit Connection™ (PCC), electronic signature (e-sign), blanket guarantee, and user acceptance testing (UAT), for new product releases. TLC also provides backup telephone technical support for TG's product support group (PSG).

"Our customers' situations can be somewhat unclear, when they make their initial testing requests," said Karen Greening, TLC team lead. "We work very closely with account executives and business integration consultants, to ensure premium service for our customers."

TLC also is responsible for monitoring and resolving erred files and performing other "behind the scenes" tasks to allow TG's customers to experience a seamless process.

"There is a lot of work happening in the background that we handle proactively," said Joseph Gola, TLC technical support consultant. "Handling these types of files quickly and effectively ensures that the process remains transparent to the customer and does not affect their ability to serve their students."

In addition, the TLC team fields Financial Aid Management System (FAMs)-related questions received from school financial aid offices via FAMily@tgslc.org. These questions are then routed to the appropriate member(s) of the TG Users Group's FAMs subcommittee (FAM-ily). Suzy Epley, TLC senior technical support analyst is TG's FAMs liaison. She helps schools find answers to their FAMs-related questions, especially as they relate to TG's products and services. For more information on TG's FAMs initiative (FAM-ily), visit *TG Online* at www.tgslc.org/tug/tug_fams.cfm.

"As you can see, TLC always is looking for ways to enhance and expedite our service to our customers," Karen said. "And I'm proud to be among such a great group of professionals."

More information

To learn more about the TLC team, call (800) 332-1455 or send an e-mail message to TGTesting@tgslc.org. For FAMs-related questions, send an e-mail message to FAMily@tgslc.org.

Question of the Week

Q: Are loan fees included in the cost of attendance (COA)?

A: A school should include in a student's COA the origination fee and insurance premium (also known as the guarantee fee) for any FFELP loan included in the student's financial aid package. This includes fees for any Stafford loan funds the student is borrowing and fees for any PLUS loan funds the student's parent

is borrowing on the student's behalf. A school may also choose to include in the COA loan fees associated with a private (alternative) educational loan the student is obtaining, as long the loan is included as estimated financial assistance in the student's financial aid package. You may use either actual loan fee amounts or an average of fees charged to borrowers of the same type of loan at your school (per the 2005-06 *Federal Student Aid Handbook*, page 3-19).

Do you have a question?

If you have a question that needs an answer, feel free to *Ask TG™*. *Ask TG* is TG's online query tool for borrowers, schools, and lenders. *Ask TG* includes a database of frequently asked questions about financial aid, student loan processing, and TG's products and services. To submit a question to *Ask TG*, visit <http://tgsdc.custhelp.com>.

Legislative update

The December 13 issue of TG's *Legislative Report* includes updates on the reconvening of the House and Senate for about two weeks. During this time, a conference committee will attempt to adjust the differences between the four House and Senate spending and tax reconciliation bills and pass the FY 2006 appropriations bills for Health, Human Services, Education, and Labor, and Defense, reauthorize the Patriot Act, border security legislation, and a pension reform bill.

Keep up with the latest developments by reading the full report on *TG Online* at www.tgsdc.org/lege_report/index.cfm.

This, that, and the other

Like most of you, *Shoptalk Online* is taking a break for the holidays. You will receive your next weekly edition of *Shoptalk Online* on Tuesday, January 3.

TG will be closed on Friday, December 23 and Monday, December 26, for the Christmas holiday and on Monday, January 2, for the New Year's holiday.

Happy Holidays!



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To ask questions about *Shoptalk Online*, please contact Communications at (800) 252-9743, ext. 4732 or communications@tgslc.org.

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