

2020-21 State Work Study (SWS) Guidance & FAQs October 2020

Program Guidance

For eligible students awarded SWS (as defined in [WAC 250-40-040](#)) who are unable to perform regularly scheduled work hours or tasks as a result of an employer's COVID-19 suspension or significant alteration of normal business operations during the 2020-21 Academic Year:

Option 1 - SWS will continue to reimburse employers for the applicable program share of eligible hours through the remainder of 2020-21 as long as the SWS employer continues to pay its share of gross student wages for those hours. To receive reimbursement under these conditions, there is no change to the operational process for employers. Hours eligible for SWS reimbursement under this option include, but are not limited to, performing typical job tasks, remote work, including project-based assignments, or not working because of COVID-19 limitations.

Option 2 - Alternatively or in addition to Option 1, institutions may also utilize their remaining 2020-21 SWS allocations to fulfill the financial aid commitment made to SWS students by reclassifying their remaining 2020-21 SWS awards as general financial aid, up to the maximum of the student's remaining SWS award, and without an associated employer match requirement. Eligible students must have demonstrated their intention to be "work-ready" in 2020-21 and continue to meet all SWS eligibility requirements throughout the period of award. Possible "work-ready" examples include, but are not limited to, the student attending a virtual Human Resources orientation conducted by the employer (whether paid or unpaid), documentation indicating that the student actively searched or inquired about available SWS positions, or having prior SWS employment experience.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. What time period does SWS emergency guidance cover?

SWS emergency guidance authorizing the use of Option 1 and/or Option 2 is applicable to any and all 2020-21 Academic Year SWS activity.

2. Can an institution employ both Option 1 and Option 2, or does it have to choose one or the other?

Institutions can utilize one of these options, or both Option 1 and Option 2, as best serves the interests of individual students and is possible within the limits of the institution's remaining SWS allocation.

3. Does our institutional SWS allocation include employer matching dollars, especially as that relates to the use of Option 2?

No, institutional SWS allocations only include the state portion associated with gross SWS awards. Institutions may convert any amount of their remaining SWS allocation to general financial aid under Option 2 to serve eligible SWS students who are "work-ready" in 2020-21. Institutions determine how much they can award to each eligible student from their remaining SWS funds, and per individual student award maximums, but we ask that you distribute available SWS funds equitably across the eligible student population funded under Option 2.

Remaining institutional SWS allocations, and whether or not the institution can match any of these dollars, will determine how much emergency SWS funding can be awarded to individual students. There is no requirement for institutions to match the amount of its SWS program allocation that it is converted to general financial aid under Option 2.

4. How will public institutions request SWS funds for use under Option 1 and/or Option 2?

Public institutions will submit cash requests through the WSAC Portal for to draw down any amount of remaining SWS funds for use in either Option 1 and/or Option 2 using the standard operational procedure. We strongly encourage public institutions to make timely and regular SWS cash requests.

5. How will private institutions request SWS funds for use under Option 1 and/or Option 2?

Private institutions will submit time sheets through the WSAC Portal for on- or off-campus employer reimbursement under Option 1 using standard operational procedures. Financial Aid Directors at private institutions have been provided temporary permissions within the WSAC Portal to draw down any amount of remaining SWS funds within their 2020-21 allocation to fund direct payments to students under Option 2.

6. How should institutions document emergency SWS distributions under Option 2?

Institutions must keep a record of their emergency SWS distributions consistent with other state financial aid documentation. Institutions must track the eligible students served, emergency SWS distribution amounts, and the date of the emergency distribution under Option 2 for audit and Unit Record Reporting purposes.

These emergency SWS awards will be reported in the same way as traditional SWS earnings on the 2020-21 Unit Record Report.

7. How should institutions report 2020-21 SWS expenditures under Option 1 and/or Option 2 on the Unit Record Report (URR)?

All 2020-21 SWS funds activity, whether wages under Option 1 or emergency grant under Option 2, should be reported in URR as the institution would normally report SWS funds activity in URR. In other words, there should be no difference in reporting 2020-21 SWS Option 1 or Option 2 expenditures on URR, they are both to be reported under SWS. Institutions have complete flexibility on internal coding necessary to track 2020-21 SWS activity, including assigning distinct award codes as necessary for each Option, however institutions must be able to combine all 2020-21 SWS activity for URR reporting purposes.

8. Is a student directive required for students at private institutions receiving emergency SWS funding?

Private institutions must distribute emergency SWS funds to students under Option 2 according to the instructions of individual students' Student Directive for current WCG/CBS recipients and students must be notified that they can change their selection.

Non-WCG/CBS students eligible for emergency SWS distributions under Option 2 must be provided with the opportunity to select how they wish to receive those funds, although colleges can indicate the a default option as long as it is clear how a student can change it, ideally through an electronic Student Directive.

9. What 2020-21 Academic Year terms can SWS Option 2 emergency grants be utilized within?

SWS Option 2 emergency grants can be utilized for any term during the 2020-21 Academic Year, assuming of course the student is eligible, meaning the student is “work-ready” and remains enrolled/eligible for SWS in the upcoming term.

10. Can a student awarded an Option 2 SWS emergency grant for a future term earn additional Option 1 SWS wages if they are able to return to work during that term?

If a student has already been paid out Option 2 emergency grant funds at the beginning of a term the student would not be able to earn additional Option 1 SWS wages in that term, **unless** the student has additional capacity to earn SWS funds through work when that is possible either on- or off-campus. For example, additional SWS capacity could result if either the Option 2 emergency grant did not cover the student's full SWS award amount for the term or the student has additional unmet need in the term that could allow additional SWS Option 1 funds to be awarded, assuming the institution has enough SWS funds to award and the associated employer can cover the required match.