

ARP HEERF III Student Emergency Grant Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is the ARP HEERF III Student Emergency Grant?

The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III (HEERF III) authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARP), was signed into law on March 11, 2021 and provides emergency grant funds from the U.S. Department of Education to students enrolled during the declared COVID-19 pandemic to help cover expenses associated with any component of the student's cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care) or child care.

What is the eligibility criteria for the ARP HEERF III Emergency Student Grant?

Students must be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a degree or certificate program, and be currently enrolled in classes. As mandated by U.S. Department of Education, priority must be given to students with exceptional need, such as those who receive Pell Grants.

CUNY uses a distribution process based on enrollment and financial aid data from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and centered on need, enrollment status (full-time or part-time) and claimed dependents.

How much do qualifying students receive?

Eligible recipients receive a minimum base grant amount. This base amount varies by college and increases based on need using the Estimated Family Contribution calculation and reported dependents from the student's FAFSA and their Fall 2021 enrollment status.

How do students apply?

There is no application process. Eligible students will receive an email notifying them of their selection based on the above criteria.

I filed the 2021-2022 FAFSA. Is this acceptable?

Yes. If you are eligible to file, the 2021-2022 FAFSA is most helpful in reaching an eligibility determination.

When will students be notified of their selection to receive a grant?

Awarded students will be notified beginning in mid- to late November 2021 for the Fall 2021 term. Those selected will receive their grants on a rolling-basis beginning in early December.

Can international and/or undocumented students receive funds from the ARP HEERF III Federal Emergency Grant?

Yes. International and undocumented students are eligible for this grant and are encouraged to reach out to their campus Financial Aid Office for eligibility determination.

Will receiving a grant through the ARP HEERF III Student Emergency Grant affect my financial aid?

No. Recipients will see no impact on the calculation of their full financial need. Qualifying students may receive this grant in addition to other aid awarded.

At institutions that provide both online and in-person education, are students who are enrolled exclusively in online programs during the COVID-19 national emergency eligible to receive the ARP HEERF III student emergency financial aid grant?

Yes. Students who meet the eligibility criteria may receive this grant regardless of whether their classes are online or in person.

Does a student who receives an emergency grant under ARP HEERF III need to include the grant in their gross income for tax purposes?

No. Emergency financial aid grants awarded under the ARP HEERF III for unexpected expenses, unmet financial need, or expenses related to the disruption of campus operations as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, are qualified disaster relief payments under section 139 of the Internal Revenue Code. The grant should therefore not be included in the student's gross income.

I received an emergency financial aid grant under the ARP HEERF III and used some of it to pay for course materials that are required for online learning because of a campus closure. Can I claim a tuition and fees tax deduction for the cost of these materials? Or treat the cost of these materials as a qualifying education expense if I am claiming the American Opportunity Credit or the Lifetime Learning Credit?

No. Because the emergency financial aid grant is not includible in your gross income, you cannot claim any deduction or credit for expenses paid with the grant. See section 139(h) of the Internal Revenue Code.

If I do not receive notification that I qualify for an ARP HEERF III Emergency Grant, can I appeal to receive a grant? Or if I do receive a grant but wish to request additional funds, can I appeal the amount of my grant?

Unfortunately, neither eligibility nor the amount of a grant award can be appealed due to the limited amount of funding and the volume of our students. You can [contact your campus's Financial Aid Office](#) to see if you are eligible for other assistance.

If I receive an ARP HEERF III Student Emergency Grant and have an outstanding balance on my CUNYfirst student account, will the funds be applied to those charges?

Using an ARP HEERF III grant to reduce or eliminate an outstanding balance on your account can only be done with your consent via the To Do List in CUNYfirst. Otherwise, these funds will be refunded and issued directly to you, regardless of your account standing.

If I receive funds from the ARP HEERF III Student Emergency Grant and subsequently withdraw from the spring semester, do I have to return the grant?

No. The emergency grant is intended to provide one-time relief to mitigate the financial impact of COVID-19. Under no circumstances will recipients be required to return any portion of the funds.