

RETURN OF TITLE IV FUNDS (R2T4)

Federal regulations require that a college perform an R2T4 calculation if a student fully withdraws prior to the 60.01% point of the semester. As Berkeley is not an attendance-taking institution, unofficial withdrawals, per federal regulation, are brought to the 50% point for this calculation. The college/student must return all the federal financial aid, as indicated by the results of the R2T4 calculation. The waiver, provided by the CARES Act, allows the college to not return the funds or, if the college already did so, to re-disburse the aid to the student's accounts. If there is an open balance, Berkeley will apply the aid to that first. Any remaining credit will be refunded to the student.

This interim policy is based on the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Pub. L. No. 116-136, (CARES Act), and guidance provided by the US Department of Education (USDOE) on March 5, 2020 (updated March 20, 2020), April 3, 2020 and May 15, 2020 (updated June 16, 2020).

The May 15, 2020 guidance clarified the timeframe for R2T4 waiver eligibility. Specifically, the guidance states: "For any student who begins attendance in a payment period or period of enrollment that begins on or includes March 13, 2020, and subsequently withdraws from the period as a result of COVID-19-related circumstances, an institution is not required to return Title IV funds." This means that all students who withdrew from Berkeley College's winter 2020 semester are potentially eligible for the R2T4 waiver.

The May 15, 2020 guidance also clarified which onsite and online students are eligible for the CARES Act R2T4 waiver. Specifically, the guidance states: "Any institution that moved students from ground-based instruction to distance learning, closed campus housing or other campus facilities, or experienced other interruptions in instruction may consider all withdrawals from students enrolled in ground-based instruction during the covered period to have been the result of circumstances related to the COVID-19 national emergency." Therefore, based on this guidance, all Berkeley students enrolled in at least one onsite class during the Winter 2020 semester are eligible for the CARES Act R2T4 waiver.

As for students who were 100% online during the winter 2020 semester, the May 15, 2020 guidance states: "Institutions must obtain written attestations from students who withdrew from distance education programs explaining why the withdrawal was the result of the COVID-19 emergency." Therefore, Berkeley will be reviewing records and contacting all students who were 100% online and withdrew during the winter 2020 semester to determine if the withdrawal was the result of the COVID-19 emergency, if so, obtain an attestation to that effect.

Those students who are now eligible for the waiver, based on the new guidance, already had the R2T4 calculation completed and funds were returned. For these students, Berkeley will request funds back. Berkeley will make every effort to retrieve and return any monies due to the government. If retrieved funds cause a credit balance, Berkeley will refund the student within 14 days of that credit.

Students who withdrew due to COVID-19 and were left with open balances as a result, that appealed for and received an offsetting credit and had their aid reinstated, will have the offsetting credit removed before the college determines the amount of student refund available.

Based on June 16th guidance, we have extended this policy through spring 2020 and fall 2020 assuming the national emergency is still in effect. For these two semesters every student will require an attestation to receive an R2T4 waiver.

Attestation Process

The college is sending all appropriate people an email that will include a link to an eform attestation. The attestation should be completed by the deadline indicated. Those past the deadline may or may not be considered for waivers.

If the college denies a student's eligibility for waiver, based on the guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education referenced above, the student will be given the ability to appeal via the appeal committee's email address. The committee's determination is final.

As the CARES Act waives all student loans disbursed to eligible withdrawn students, Berkeley will not request permission to reinstate or not return loan(s) from these students. Disbursement letters will be sent to students, as required by the regulations, when funds are received the second time. Students will still have the option to decline the loan, however, as the loan is being forgiven it is expected that students will not do so and instead will accept refunds as anticipated by the CARES Act.

Berkeley will report the names and aid values that would have otherwise been returned as required by USDOE.

Original Report dated Summer 2020