

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

Notice Inviting Applications for Participation in the Quality Assurance Program

A. Justification

1. Necessity of Information Collected

Section 487A(a) of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended, authorizes the Secretary to select institutions for voluntary participation in a Quality Assurance (QA) Program. The information collected is necessary for continued Program expansion and to permit eligible institutions of higher education to apply to participate in the QA Program.

Although all institutions that meet the standards for selection are free to apply to participate in the QA Program, the Secretary will select institutions that demonstrate a commitment to high standards of stewardship in their administration of Title IV, HEA Programs, and are willing to continuously make improvements in the quality of services to students. Once accepted, institutions are granted flexibility to determine their procedures for selecting the students/application data they will verify, based on their analysis of their verification data. In keeping with the Secretary's plan for expansion of the Quality Assurance Program, there is no limit on the total number of Program participants.

2. Purpose and Use of Information Collected

The Secretary needs to know that an applicant understands and is committed to quality assurance. Entry into the QA Program will be facilitated by submission of a letter of application. The letter of application shall demonstrate that basic procedures are in place, for the applicant institution, to control for and correct weaknesses in its financial aid operations. The statement also will demonstrate an institution's intent and capacity to administer program activities.

3. Consideration of Improved Information Technology

The paperwork burden that consists of several descriptive paragraphs is minimal. An institution may submit an application in response to this Notice by mail, electronic mail, or by fax.

4. Efforts to Identify Duplication

The QA Program focuses on quality assurance and overall improvement. Therefore, the descriptive information sought is not collected for other purposes or by other entities, thus there is no duplication.

5. Burden Minimization as Applied to Small Business

The information is collected from institutions of higher education, e.g., 2- and 4-year Public, Private, and Proprietary institutions. No small businesses or other entities are impacted by this collection.

6. Consequences of Less Frequent Data Collection

Section 487A(a) of the HEA authorizes the Secretary to select institutions for voluntary participation in the QA Program. The burden of this data collection is borne by different entities each year, i.e., those institutions newly applying to participate in the QA Program. A less frequent collection of this data would impede the expansion in the number of institutions of higher education participating in the QA Program.

7. Special Circumstances Governing Data Collection

ED cannot identify any circumstances that would require the collection of this information to be conducted in a manner inconsistent with the guidelines in 5 CFR 1320.6.

8. Consultations Outside the Agency

This information collection is basically a rollover of a previous collection. The Department has previously requested and considered input from representatives of the higher education community in a variety of ways i.e., training workshops, conferences, offices within the Department such as: FSA Policy Development Office and the Office of General Counsel. The Department continues to consult with participants through regional meetings and numerous informal discussions. No public comments were received on the Notice that was published August 13, 2007 and closed on October 12, 2007.

9. Payments or Gifts to respondents

The Department will not provide payments or gifts to the respondents participating in the QA Program.

10. Assurance of Confidentiality

No assurance of confidentiality is provided to the respondents. Therefore it is not applicable.

11. Questions of a Sensitive Nature

The Department is not requesting any sensitive data.

12. Annual Hour Burden for Respondents/Recordkeepers

The total annual burden is estimated to be approximately 125 hours (125 x 1 hour per response). This figure represents an estimated time of 125 hours needed by approximately 125 respondents.

The annualized cost per respondent is \$30. This cost estimate was derived in the following manner:

One Professional staff member at \$30 per hour (30 x 1 = \$30)

Total Cost = \$3,750.00

13. Annual Cost Burden to Respondents

There is no additional cost burden to respondents. There is no start-up cost component, as respondents are preparing a letter of application.

14. Estimated annual cost to the Federal Government

The collected information is stored and used only as reference materials. There is no additional cost to the federal government. Applicants are screened through the routine eligibility process in response to their letter of application.

15. Reasons for Changes to Burden Hour Estimated

The total burden hours estimated annually has not changed. It will remain at 125 hours. This represents an estimated time of 125 hours, the equivalent of 1 burden hour per respondent.

16. Collection of Information with Published Results

The results of the collection of information will not be published.

17. Approval to Not Display Expiration Date

ED is not seeking this approval as we routinely display this information.

18. Exception to the Certification Statement

ED is not requesting any exceptions to the "Certification for Paperwork Reduction Act Submissions" of OMB Form 83-1.

B. Collections of Information Employing Statistical Methods

This collection of information will not employ any statistical methods.