

January 2002

**Re: Quality Analysis Tool for Windows 2002-2003, Version 2.0**

Have you ever wondered how effectively verification edits target students in your applicant population? We are pleased to announce the availability of the Quality Analysis Tool (QA Tool) for Windows 2002-2003, Version 2.0 software, that will help any school answer this question. This letter describes the functionality of QA Tool.

This product was designed to help schools conduct in-depth analysis of applicant populations using data from initial and paid on ISIR transactions. The analysis will provide data to help schools understand the effectiveness of their own institutional verification program or the Federal edits, as well as how changes in student reported data items impact the EFC and Pell Grant Eligibility.

Included in this letter are the following:

- A list of the product enhancements,
- The results gathered from QA Tool benchmark testing, and
- Reminders on how to back up and optimize your QA Tool database.

**How to Obtain the Software and Documentation**

You can download the software and the related user documentation from the U.S. Department of Education's Student Financial Assistance Download (SFADownload) Web site located at **SFADownload.ed.gov**.

Instructions for downloading QA Tool from the SFADownload Web site are located in the "Installation Instructions" chapter of the *Installation Guide for Quality Analysis Tool for Windows 2002-2003*.

If you do not have access to the Internet, or you have trouble opening the SFADownload Web site, contact CPS/WAN Technical Support at **800/330-5947** or via e-mail at **CPSWAN@NCS.COM**.

**Note:** Some organizations restrict their users from downloading from FTP sites. If you have trouble downloading, try again later. If you are still unable to download, contact your technical support staff to ensure that you have full FTP download rights.

### **If You Have Policy and Technical Support Questions**

If you have a Quality Assurance Program policy-related question, you can post an e-mail on the Quality Assurance Program listserv via **qa-team@lists.air-dc.org**. The Performance and Accountability Improvement staff will respond to your message.

**Note:** Make sure you include your telephone number in your message.

If you have questions regarding QA Tool, such as installation issues, software problem resolution, software functionality, and technical assistance, you can call CPS/WAN Technical Support. You can reach them Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. – 7 p.m. (CT), at **800/330-5947**. You may also e-mail inquiries, comments, or suggestions 24 hours a day to **CPSWAN@NCS.COM**. A representative will respond within 24 business hours.

SFA is planning to help users further understand the tool and what the data means through its spring training efforts and the Quality Assurance/Experimental Sites Conference.

*CPS/WAN Technical Support*

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## QA Tool, Version 2.0

The U.S. Department of Education is pleased to announce the release of QA Tool, Version 2.0 and encourage all schools to consider using it.

Instructions on how to download the software and install it are located later in this letter as well as in the *Installation Guide for Quality Analysis Tool for Windows 2002-2003*.

If you have access to the Internet and you cannot open the SFAdownload Web site, call your technical support staff to ensure you have full FTP download rights.

If you do not have access to the Internet, or you do have FTP download rights and still cannot open the SFAdownload Web site, contact CPS/WAN Technical Support at **800/330-5947** or via e-mail at **CPSWAN@NCS.COM** to request diskettes.

## Product Features

The 2002-2003 Quality Analysis Tool for Windows (QA Tool) focuses on *initial* and *paid on* ISIR data. You compare these two transactions side by side to see which fields were corrected. Using EFC ranges and increments of change, you can analyze a specific student population to determine which fields were corrected most often and how those changes affected the students' EFCs.

This gives a school key information about its own applicant population, and how well its verification program – either school designed or federally prescribed – is targeting the right students/data elements. For the first time, non-QA schools will have data that shows what impact the CPS edits are having on eligibility/awards for students at your school. Schools can also use the data generated from the reports to identify information on the FAFSA that is often misreported and help students and parents better understand how to respond accurately.

Listed below are changes to the 2002-2003 Quality Analysis Tool for Windows:

### *General*

- Quality Analysis Tool, Version 2.0 analyzes 2002-2003 data.
- QA Tool is now available to all schools. Remember, however, that use of this product does not make a school a participant in the QA Program. Schools wanting to participate in the QA Program should contact the Performance and Accountability Improvement Staff via e-mail at **qa-team@lists.air-dc.org** for further information.

### ***Custom Formats***

- More fields are available for creating Selected Fields Codes.
- For your convenience, three predefined Selected Field formats have been added. They are ALL FIELDS, VERIFICATION WORKSHEET – DEPENDENT, and VERIFICATION WORKSHEET – INDEPENDENT.

### ***Import***

- The QAP Database import type has been removed.
- You can import user-defined data.
- The ISIR Add Date and Transaction fields are available for the 2002-2003 EDEExpress Database import to help you identify ISIRs to import.

### ***Process***

- The Verification Selection process has been added to help you identify students who meet the criteria of verification profiles that you create.
- The Multiple Entry function has been added to make updating student records easier.
- At the end of the Data Validation process you have the option of printing a report listing any records that were deleted.

### ***Print***

- The Print Setup option has been added to make it easier for you to select a printer, paper size, and other printing options.
- On the Transaction Comparison report, you can now choose to print only fields for which the value changed from the Initial transaction to the Paid On transaction.
- The Dependency Status field can be used as a filter for reports.
- The Query Management Report, System Setup Report, and record layouts can be printed without running the Data Validation process.
- Sort order and field order options have been added to some reports.
- On the List—EFC Change by Student Report, the Paid On EFC column has been removed, and an Initial Value column has been added.
- The Paid On School Verification flag has been removed from the List—Verification Flags by Student Report.
- Two new reports have been added: List—Verification Selection Criteria by Student and List—Verification Selection Criteria by Code.
- Two reports have new names. Student Listing of EFC Change is now List—EFC Change by Student, and Student Listing with Verification Flags is now List—Verification Flags by Student.
- The ISIR record layout has been removed.

### ***Setup***

- The Paid On Transaction from Sample option has been removed.
- You can create verification profiles to apply to records you select.
- You can set Printer, File, or Screen as your default printing destination.

### ***Transaction Comparison Tab***

- A Source of Correction field has been added to the Transaction Comparison tab.
- You can sort fields to view them by description or by sequence number.
- The Paid On School Verification Flag has been removed.

### ***Query***

- You can use a new predefined query to query on an EFC tolerance that you specify.
- You can compare numeric fields within records using the new Field to Field option.

## **Full Data Export Function**

The Export function uses the Full Data Record Layout to create a file of all records from the QA Tool database. This file is for your school's analysis. It is not the file to be submitted to ED. (The procedure and the file to be submitted to ED will be announced via the listserv.) You can run the Full Data Export at any time.

## **QA Tool, Version 2.0 Print Benchmarking Results**

### *QA Tool Supports These Printers*

We tested the following printers that are Windows NT 4.0, Windows 98, Windows Me, and Windows 2000 compatible:

- HP8150
- HP4
- HP3Si
- HP5SiMX
- HP4000N
- HP4M
- HP4Si
- HP8000N
- HP4MPlus
- HP5Si

## ***Reports***

The benchmarking results for QA Tool reports and lists are as follows:

- These reports were tested in Windows NT, Windows Me, Windows 98, and Windows 2000 on HP8150, HP4000N, HP8000N, HP4, HP4M, HP4MPlus, HP3Si, HP4Si, HP5Si, and HP5SiMX.
- These tests were all completed on a Pentium III 800 with 128 MB RAM.
- The Average Time Elapsed column indicates the measurement of time starting when the user clicks OK in the QA Tool Print dialog box and when the operating system (Windows NT/Me/98/2000) print dialog appears.
- The Benchmarking Volume is the number of records and approximate number of pages that were printed in the test.

<b>Report</b>	<b>Operating System</b>	<b>Benchmarking Volume</b>	<b>Average Time Elapsed</b>
Student Listing of EFC Change	NT 4.0	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Student Listing of EFC Change	Windows Me	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Student Listing of EFC Change	Windows 98	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Student Listing of EFC Change	Windows 2000	90 recs/2 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	NT 4.0	5 recs/20 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	Windows Me	5 recs/20 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	Windows 98	5 recs/20 pages	1 second
Transaction Comparison Report	Windows 2000	5 recs/20 pages	1 second

## Reminders

### *Back Up Your Database Weekly*

You should back up your QA Tool database file (QAT23.mdb) regularly so you do not lose your data. We recommend that you back up your files at least once a week. You should also back up your data before and after you run utilities as a precautionary measure.

QA Tool does not include a backup utility. You must use your own backup software. Be sure to test your backup software to verify that it can reliably restore your backups.

### *Optimize Your Database with Software Utilities*

QA Tool contains utilities that allow you to optimize your database to prevent problems. We recommend that you repair, compact, and verify your database once a week. Once all three are successful, back up the database (see section above).

Run the database utilities in the following order:

- Repair Database
- Compact Database
- Verify Database
- Repair Database
- Compact Database

For specific information regarding repairing, compacting, and verifying, see section "Run the Repair Database Utility."

### *Run the Repair Database Utility*

The Repair Database utility resolves inconsistencies in record storage. Events such as a power outage or a LAN failure can corrupt your database if it occurs while QA Tool updates your records.

QA Tool may not detect database corruption, so if your system functions unpredictably (for example, you start getting database error messages, even something as simple as a missing flag on a record), use the Repair Database utility. Running this utility once a week helps to prevent database problems.

**Warning:** Before using this utility, be sure you have space on your hard drive that is at least equal to three times the current size of the database.

### ***Improve Performance with the Compact Database Utility***

The Compact Database utility improves the performance of QA Tool by optimizing the database (QAT23.MDB) file and reclaiming space on your computer's hard drive. As you add, modify, or delete records in QA Tool, the database file can become fragmented.

Running this utility weekly makes the database files smaller and improves system performance. It can also significantly reduce the size of your database. This does not mean that records are removed, only that they are organized and stored more efficiently.

**Warning:** Before using this utility, be sure you have hard drive space available at least equal to three times the current size of the database.

### ***Prevent Problems with the Verify Database Utility***

The Verify Database function checks for data relationship integrity in your database. If QA Tool crashes or abnormally halts processing, a record may be missing one of its associated records. Verify Database recreates the missing record.

Running this function weekly helps to prevent problems.

**Warning:** Before using this utility, be sure you have hard drive space available that is at least equal to three times the current size of the database.