Transitioning to PowerFaids 12.2:  
A Simulation for Financial Aid Advisors

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Course Description
This course will train Financial Aid Advisors on the software upgrade from PowerFaids 11.1 to PowerFaids 12.2. Financial Aid Advisors will be given real-life problems to solve within a simulation of the new software suite released by College Entrance Examination Board.

Course Justification
The job of a Financial Aid Advisor is complex. Financial Aid Advisors must always remain current on the latest proceedings within Congress and transfer those actions to their position. As well, software must always be current with what is going on within the government. College Entrance Examination Board, the company that writes the PowerFaids software suite, has released a newer version of PowerFaids to include multiple new features which are necessary to remain up compliant with Title IV funding legislation. In order for the Financial Aid Advisors to remain up to date, practice with real-life scenarios in a faux setting will encourage learning of the new software. As with all new software, there is typically a learning curve that users must overcome and it is this premise that justifies the need for this course. By transitioning to a new software version via a simulated version of it, it is likely to result in fewer errors in day-to-day tasks which will help to avoid audits, and non-compliance with federal legislation.

Target Audience
Financial Aid Advisors and Student Services staff at Yavapai College.

Justification for Using Technology-Based Training
Instruction and training would be severely limited without technology-based training to perform the verification processes necessary to remain compliant with the Dept. of Education. By providing a technology-based simulation, the advisors will be able to “practice” without ill-effects potentially
occurring to student’s records. Also, hands-on experience with the software will encourage greater transfer of learning for the trainees.

**Description of the Simulation**

The simulation will involve one person at a time within a typical office setting. The simulation with be computer-based which will mimic the original PowerFaids 12.2 software suite. The trainees will be given faux files to verify within the simulation. Within the simulation the trainees will face a host of problems within the students’ Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR), which is the processed version of a student’s Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which will need to be identified, investigated and resolved. Upon successful completion of five random problems, the trainee will be finished with the simulation and ready for follow-up.

**Type of Simulation**

This course is considered a Diagnostic Simulation (Tactical-Decision) because trainees will face an unclear, complex problem that they must seek additional information to determine the nature of the problem and which strategies will be needed to resolve that problem.

**Scope of the Simulation**

The concepts and skills to be taught will be how to navigate through the new software and how to perform the verification tasks within it. Concepts to be covered include an all-inclusive overview of the new version of the PowerFaids software suite. Most of the skills needed should already be sustained by the participants; it is an adaptation of prior knowledge to a similar software setting.
Learning Objectives

The Participant will be able to:

- Demonstrate proficiency with the new PowerFaids software suite.
- Complete verification procedures within a reasonable amount of time as compared to the previous edition of PowerFaids (11.1).
- Adapt to idiosyncrasies of new edition of PowerFaids (12.2).
- Outline the steps to complete the verification process in the new software suite.
- Identify the procedures that are new within PowerFaids 12.2.

Problem Scenario

The participants will begin to verify a student’s record. The trainee will then come to realize that there is a problem. Possible problems encountered by participants include:

1) The trainee comes across a “C-flag” (How the Department of Education reports errors on ISIRs) but it is unclear of what the C-flag is referring to.

2) A student is an eligible non-citizen but completed the FAFSA as a citizen and that they did not sign-up for selective service. Trainee must diagnose problem from the student’s ISIR and the verification forms returned by the student and take corrective measures.

3) A student shows full need yet during verification it is revealed that the student only included the information of one of the parents.

4) A student is considered independent because s/he has a child. Student lives with parents though and student’s child is claimed on their parent’s tax forms. Trainee must determine whether student is still independent and calculate their Expected Family Contribution (EFC) according to their findings.

Participant Roles

Participants maintain their role as Financial Aid Advisors.
Staff and Peripheral Roles

The trainer will manage the course which includes; operating the computer, facilitating proper use of
the training software; provide any necessary information conducive to participants in the acquisition of
knowledge for this course and assisting participants when necessary. Trainer will at no time assist
participant with the actual verification process.

Events

While the trainee verifies each student’s file, they must input the correct information into the
appropriate locations within the software and save often. The software will make necessary
calculations. If the information is put into the wrong place within the software or is obviously
incorrect, the verification process of the file will not be able to proceed until the correct information is
input. Trainees must learn what information is now required and where to place it within the new
version of the PowerFaids suite. While verifying files the trainee will also run into at least three of the
problems listed above. The trainee must recognize the problem and take corrective measures to
appropriately resolve the problem. Through the course of these events, trainees will familiarize
themselves with the idiosyncrasies of the new software version as well as recognize the correct steps to
complete the verification process.

Model of the Simulation
**Resource Requirements**

A computer with Microsoft Windows XP SP2.

The simulation program which I will write using C++.

A student’s Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR).

A student’s completed verification papers.

An office with electricity will also be necessary to provide the training.

**Consequences**

The consequences for correct decision making in this simulation include:

1) Pop-ups that very from saying “Good Job!” to “Way to Go!” to “Keep up the Good Work!”

2) Green check marks next to the box where information is input.

The consequences of incorrect decision making in this simulation include:

1) Pop-ups that very from saying “Try Again” or “Almost!” or “Are You Sure?”

2) Red “X” marks next to the box where information is input.