



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Hearings & Appeals

ELECTRONIC FILING USER GUIDE



U.S. Department of Education
ELECTRONIC FILING IN PROCEEDINGS BEFORE
THE OFFICE OF HEARINGS & APPEALS (OHA)

User Guide

Introduction

The purpose of this guide is to provide an overview of the U.S. Department of Education's Electronic Filing System used in administrative adjudications conducted by the Office of Hearings & Appeals (OHA). The guide is intended to help current and new users file certain documents by use of the OHA E-Filing System (OES). OES provides administrative litigants with a process to submit documents via a web-based interface accessible 24 hours every day in lieu of submitting paper documents. OES also provides litigants with an acknowledgement receipt of filings and records the time of submission. These procedures replace current paper-based procedures.

OES utilizes standard web-based screens and prompts to enable users to submit documents directly in PDF format directly to OHA within minutes. When creating your PDF documents, you choose the tool, process and workflow with which you author your documents, convert them to standard PDF files and then submit them to OHA's secure servers.

This guide identifies how to register for an e-filing account, how to request access to a particular case, and how to upload documents. It also identifies the email notifications you can expect to receive when requesting a user account, requesting access to a new case, and uploading documents.

System Limits:

1. There is no limit on the number of documents that may be uploaded in a case.
2. The maximum file size is 50 MB (smaller files preferred whenever possible). A file that exceeds 50 MB should be broken into parts and submitted as multiple E-filings.
3. Files must be submitted in PDF format only. Multiple PDF files may not be zipped into a .zip file.
4. Utilize the link on OHA's website – oha.ed.gov to access OES.

Before you begin:

1. Ensure that the case is the type in which E-filing by web-based electronic form is permitted. Cases permitted are Higher Education Act cases, GEPA cases, Impact Aid cases, and salary overpayment cases.
2. Ensure that you have the docket number for the case you wish to e-file a document. You must have a valid docket number to register for an account. Your

- request for an E-filer account will also constitute a request to be associated with the aforementioned case.
3. Register as an E-filer by clicking on the appropriate link on the log-in screen. You then will complete an online form. Only users with an E-filing account will be permitted to E-file. You must have a valid E-mail address to register.
 4. If you are approved, you will be sent an E-mail containing your user name and temporary password. Upon your initial log-in to the system, you will be prompted to change your password.
 5. If you are not approved, you will be sent an E-mail notifying you of your rejection and the notice will explain why your registration was rejected.
 6. Attorneys and self-represented litigants may register as E-filers.
 7. Your request for registration as an E-filer will be acted upon within one business day.
 8. Read this E-filing User Guide.

Access the E-filing system:

1. Go to OES to access the system by clicking the link at: <http://oha.ed.gov/efileprocedures.html>
2. Log on to OES using your registered E-mail address and password. Your user name is your email address. Upon your initial log-in, you will be prompted to change your password.
3. Passwords will auto-expire after 90 days.
4. An E-filer's account will be disabled after all active cases are closed for that E-filer and 90 days of non-use have passed. An E-filer may request reactivation of a disabled account by clicking on the appropriate link on the log-in screen.
5. An E-filer's account will be locked after three failed password attempts. If an E-filer forgets the password, he or she may click on the link titled "Forgot your password?" A user will be asked to answer a knowledge question to have an e-mail sent with a password. Your successful request for a temporary password will unlock your account.
6. Once an E-filer's account is approved, the E-filer will click on the link provided in the approval e-mail message to access OES. Your user name (i.e. a reminder that your user name is your email address) and password will be provided in the e-mail. Upon an E-filer's initial access of the E-filing application, the user will be prompted to change his or her password. The E-filer then may begin the process to E-file a document.
7. Once you log in to the system, you will be taken to your user inbox page, which will show you the list of cases for which you have permission to upload documents.
8. You must request permission to be associated with a new case even if you are already a registered E-filer. To request to be associated with a new case, click on the link to "Request Additional Case Access", which appears under the User Registration Tracking Inbox Section of your home page. A list of cases for which you are already approved will be displayed. Click on the New Case Access button. You then will need to enter the docket number for the case you are requesting access to and identify your contact type (i.e. Respondent, Respondent's

counsel, Government counsel). Requests to be associated with a new case should be made during business hours and will be acted upon within one business day.

E-filing A Document

1. From your home page, double-click on the case for which you wish to upload document. You will be taken to a page which contains case information on that particular case. Click on the New Documents/Events button to upload a document for the case.
2. Complete the online form to add a document to the case. You will be required to enter a description of the E-filing in the Filing field. The file description field should identify the case docket number and type of filing. The following are examples of suitable descriptions for the type of filing: Notice of Appearance, Motion for Extension of Time, Opposition to Pending Motion to ..., Motion to Exceed Page Limitation, Status Report, Stipulations of Fact, Motion to Dismiss, Request for Oral Argument, Request for Waiver of Salary Overpayment Debt, Request for Salary Overpayment Offset Hearing, Debtor Statement in a Waiver Proceeding, Brief, Exhibits.
3. At the bottom of the form, you will be able to upload a file. To select a file, click on Browse to open a dialog box. The drive, path and file name will appear in the Select File space. Do not make any changes to the information in the file space. If you need to rename a file, you must do so BEFORE you select it (and external to the E-filing system).
4. After selecting the file you wish to upload, click on the Submit button. To submit multiple pleadings at the same time, after uploading one document, click on the Submit and Add Another button. There is no limit on the number of files that may be uploaded although each file is restricted to a file size of 5 MB. Once you have submitted the last document, click on the Submit button. Clicking on the Submit button will take you back to your list of documents filed for that case. You have now established the "time of filing" for your submission. If you determine that you attached the wrong file at this point, you cannot go back and reselect – your only option is to begin the process again.
5. Documents may be submitted in PDF format only. An e-filer will complete an online form. File Naming Conventions: The PDF file shall be named as follows: the docket number followed by one space, the document title beginning with the filing party's designation (e.g. ED, Respondent, Name of Debtor), and the file extension ".pdf". File names cannot contain the following characters: \ / : * ? " < > |. Please note that a period is included as a prohibited character except before the filing extension.
6. For exhibits, each one shall have a separate first page providing the case name, docket number, exhibit number, and filing party.
7. Hyperlinks to other materials will be permitted in briefs.
8. Each pleading pleadings must be filed separately. For example, do not submit a Notice of Appearance and a Motion for Extension of Time in the same document. Each should be uploaded separately.

9. Once you have e-filed your document(s), to go back to your home page, click on the Home Tab at the top of the screen.
10. Although OES is designed to receive filings 24 hours per day, parties are strongly encouraged to file documents in advance of the filing deadline and during normal business hours, in the event problems are encountered and alternate means of filings become necessary.
11. OHA will respond to non-technical questions regarding the E-filing system during normal business hours. For technical problems, refer to this E-filing User Guide or send an email to the [System Administrator](#). If you wait until after the close of business to attempt to E-file and encounter problems, please note that no one will be available to assist you. Business hours are Monday through Friday from 8:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m.
12. You are responsible for taking all reasonable steps to prevent sending any material to OHA that contains computer viruses. All submissions will be scanned for viruses. Any submission that contains a virus will automatically be deleted and thus will not be processed. Rejection of a filing because it contains a virus may not excuse a late filing.
13. All documents submitted electronically must be served on other parties to the case. If a party is a registered E-filer, service will be made by OHA through the use of an email notification to the other parties that a filing has been accepted for E-filing. If a party is NOT a registered E-filer, service must be made by the filing party through alternate means such as U.S. mail, private carrier, hand-delivery or facsimile transmission. In the event of the latter, the submitted E-filing shall contain a statement of service.
14. For HEA cases **only**, if Respondent requests to submit documents electronically, the case is considered electronic. All filings by all parties should be submitted electronically. If Respondent chooses not to E-file, a hard copy of any E-filing submitted by the other party must be sent by hard copy to OHA as well as Respondent.
15. For cases other than HEA and Overpayment cases (i.e. GEPA, Impact Aid), parties are required to follow up with a hard copy to OHA.

Confirmation of Receipt E-mail

1. When you click on the Submit button, OES automatically sends the E-filer a Confirmation of Receipt E-mail to the logon account email address. Other parties in the case will also receive a copy of the email to notify them that a document has been uploaded and is awaiting approval from OHA's Docket Clerk. If you do not receive it within a couple of minutes, contact the [System Administrator](#).
2. Any document uploaded will not be available for viewing by the other party in the case until it has been accepted as an E-filing.
3. The Confirmation of Receipt E-mail is evidence that we have your submission, and the date/time of filing reflected in the E-mail does not change regardless of when OHA processes the submission. The transmitting party has the responsibility to retain records showing the date of transmission. Keep a copy of the E-mail for your records.

4. Submissions must be received by midnight Eastern Time in order to be considered filed that day.

Acceptance for Filing E-mail

1. OHA reviews each submission prior to acceptance for filing. If your submission is accepted, you will receive an Acceptance for Filing E-mail within 24 business hours.
2. If your submission is not accepted, you will be notified within 24 business hours and the notice will explain why your E-filing was rejected (i.e. failure to redact personally identifiable information included in your submission, PDF file contained a computer virus, wrong file uploaded).
3. Once your E-filing is accepted, an Acceptance for Filing E-mail also will be sent to the opposing party if that party is a registered e-filer. The E-mail will inform the opposing party that that an E-filing has been received in the case. The Acceptance for Filing E-mail constitutes service upon the other party.
4. If a party is NOT a registered E-filer, service must be made by the filing party through alternate means such as U.S. mail, private carrier, hand-delivery or facsimile transmission. In the event of the latter, the submitted E-filing shall contain a statement of service.
5. Once documents are accepted for E-filing, E-filers will be able to open, view, and print documents uploaded to a case, including documents filed by other parties.

Help Resources

1. Please consult the E-filing Procedures page on OHA's website as well as this User Guide.
2. To report technical problems with OES, please contact the [System Administrator](#).
3. Before checking on the status of your registration, your request to add a new case, or on a particular e-filing, please wait 24 business hours. Afterwards if you have not received a response to your request, please contact the [Docket Clerk](#). Do NOT send E-filings directly via email to the Docket Clerk.