
Introduction



This publication is intended for financial aid administrators and counselors who help students begin the aid process—filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), verifying information, and making corrections and other changes to the information reported on the FAFSA.

Throughout the Handbook we use “college,” “school,” and “institution” interchangeably unless a more specific use is given. Similarly, “student,” “applicant,” and “aid recipient” are synonyms. “Parents” in this volume refers to the parents of dependent students, and “you” refers to the primary audience of the Handbook: financial aid administrators at colleges. “We” indicates the United States Department of Education (Department, ED), and “federal student aid” and “Title IV aid” are synonymous terms for the financial aid offered by the Department.

We appreciate any comments that you have regarding the Application and Verification Guide (AVG), as well as all the volumes of the Federal Student Aid Handbook. We revise and clarify the text in response to questions and feedback from the financial aid community, so please contact us at fsaschoolspubs@ed.gov to let us know how to improve the Handbook so that it is always clear and informative.

CHANGES FOR 2013–2014

In the margin note on page 5, we removed the paragraph on the substitute identification number for students from the Freely Associated States (FAS). Information on that issue remains in the margin note on page 10.

On page 19 we added a parenthetical note that Social Security disability benefits are not to be counted as untaxed income as are other types of disability benefits. Also on that page we removed the note about the homebuyer tax credit, which is no longer available.

We emphasized on page 23 that the relevant court for students who were or are emancipated or in a legal guardianship must be one of competent jurisdiction in the student’s state of legal residence.

In the chart on page 34, we updated the signature requirements for when a student or parent must document tax-related data on the FAFSA.

We removed mention of the FAS—the Marshall Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, and Palau—from the statement in the margin of page 35

about other tax forms that are considered equivalent to an IRS 1040A or EZ form. Residents of the FAS do not typically file tax returns and would be considered non-filers.

Our guidance for EFCs of 99,999 or more on page 37 was supposed to be for 2012–2013 only; however, it will be valid for at least one more year.

On pages 76–77 we describe the new verification tracking groups. There are five, and the items a student must verify depend on which group she is in.

On page 80 we included guidance for documenting verification for residents of the FAS, and we added the last sentence to the paragraph on those who file a non-U.S. tax return. In the margin we added the note on electronic signatures for verification and updated the HEROES Act note to say the act has been reauthorized through September 30, 2017.

On page 81 we extended the chart on acceptable documentation with entries on the two new items for verification: high school completion status and identity/statement of educational purpose.

We removed the section in Chapter 4 on what to do when a tax return transcript is unavailable. We will consider whether a similar provision is necessary following the end of tax return processing for 2012.

On page 82 we added the paragraph on what to do when a person did not report the receipt of SNAP benefits but did in fact receive those benefits. We included an example in the margin. Similarly, we added on page 84 a paragraph about when a student or parent pays child support and this is not reported on the FAFSA.

There are new sections on page 84 about verifying high school completion and identity/statement of educational purpose.

We amended some of the text under “Updating Information” on page 85 to enhance clarity.

We added a margin note on the permissibility of making an interim disbursement of just unsubsidized aid when a student expects to receive both subsidized and unsubsidized aid. See page 86.

On page 91 we clarified that verification status code of “S” is to be used for all verification exclusions except the one for post-enrollment, which should be reported as a blank.

At the end of *Chapter 4*, we included the new suggested verification text that replaces the verification worksheets. You may use these to create verification forms, or you may create your own forms. We also included a sample verification document for a dependent student selected for Verification Tracking Group V4.

We removed *Chapter 6*, on the MPN, and moved it to *Volume 8* of the *Blue Book*.