
Introduction



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

Throughout the Federal Student Aid 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 U.S. Department of Education (the 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 on the Application and Verification Guide, as well as all the volumes of the FSA Handbook. We revise the text based on questions and feedback from the financial aid community, so please write us at fsaschoolspubs@ed.gov about how to improve the Handbook so that it is always clear and informative.

CHANGES FOR 2018–2019

On page 5 we removed from the margin the sentence about ordering bulk quantities of the FAFSA on the Web worksheet, and we added a note about the Department no longer printing or mailing FSA publications.

We added to the margin note on page 7 about Renewal FAFSA reminder emails. We mentioned a second announcement that also discusses other emails that the Department sent to students about the IRS DRT and the IRS’s program to provide low-income filers with tax preparation services.

We removed the paragraph about the Research and Customer Care Center (RCCC) from the margin of page 8 and the pertinent bullet from the list in the margin of page 9. The [RCCC has been retired](#) effective May 31, 2018.

On page 9 we added a margin note stating that when students first submit a FAFSA late in an award year, they can receive aid not just for the remainder of the year but also for any payment periods they completed earlier in the year if they were eligible for aid at the time.

In the margin note on page 12 about the Social Security number (SSN) and Pacific island residents, we added a paragraph about what must be done when these students do not use the same pseudo-SSN across award years.

Also on that page, we rewrote the text in the body of the page pertaining to SSN to explain what options students have when they enter the wrong SSN. We also cite the relevant electronic announcement.

On page 14 we added in the margin note defining graduate student a sentence explaining what three years of full-time study means in terms of credit hours.

On page 15 we expanded the information about the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) and removed it from the regular body text. We explained, among other things, that data transferred with the tool will be masked and not viewable by students and parents, and we linked to three electronic announcements that give greater detail about the effects resulting from the change to the DRT.

We combined the two bottom paragraphs on page 16 into one section titled “Married filing separately.” On the same page, we removed the margin note about prior-prior year data.

On page 27 we added the last two sentences to the paragraph about emancipation and guardianship explaining that generally legal guardianship is not the same as legal custody.

We also added the last sentence on that page, which states that students who are 22 or 23 years old may answer “Yes” if they meet the requirements of homeless unaccompanied youth. Prior to 2018–2019 that was limited to students 21 and younger.

In the first paragraph on page 79, we note that while graduate students often can only receive unsubsidized Title IV aid, if they are awarded Federal Work Study, which is subsidized, they need to complete verification if selected for it.

We updated and added to the margin note on page 81 about verification for students and schools affected by federally declared disasters.

Also on that page, we revised the second-to-last paragraph to emphasize the importance of timely and accurate reporting of V4 and V5 verification results. We are aware that not all schools are reporting these results as required.

On page 82 we updated the margin note pertaining to the HEROES Act.

We replaced the margin note about the tax return transcript matrix on page 83 since the 2018–2019 matrix was released on June 6, 2018.

We updated the discussion about tax filing extensions on page 84 and indicated that the relevant verification requirements only apply to those who

have received an extension beyond the normal six months.

We updated the guidance in the margin note on rollovers on page 85.

Also on that page we replaced the paragraph on obtaining a verification of nonfiling letter from the IRS or other relevant tax authority since that requirement has been reinstated for 2018–2019. In the paragraph preceding that one, we clarified that when a student’s spouse is a nonfiler, the student may certify on the spouse’s behalf that he or she has not filed a tax return and is not required to.

On page 86 we changed our guidance regarding amended tax returns to allow for the use of IRS DRT information on the ISIR record as an alternative to the tax return transcript. The amended return is still required though. We advised that when schools are aware that an amended return was filed, they must submit to the CPS any nondollar changes on the FAFSA and any dollar changes of \$25 or more. And we added what to do in rare cases when the IRS changes a taxpayer’s return even though he or she did not file a Form 1040X.

At the end of the first margin note on page 86, we added the sentence stating that “recomputed per computer” amounts may be ignored for verification. We also added a margin note about other IRS transcripts that are acceptable for verification.

On page 86 we added guidance about the special situation when students receive an automatic zero EFC.

In the sixth bullet on page 89, we included guidance stating that you do not have to collect proof of high school status for graduate students if entry into their program required two years’ worth of undergraduate study.

In the margin on page 90 we noted that when checking identity, it’s okay if the unexpired ID used will expire later in the award year. We also noted that schools determine which of their staff are authorized to review identity.

In the middle of page 91, we added a sentence from the online verification Q’s and A’s about changing a student’s status to unmarried.

In the second-to-last paragraph on page 92 we added a sentence clarifying that if you are required to submit changes to a student’s FAFSA because of verification, you must submit all changes, including those of less than \$25.

We added a couple margin notes on page 92: one explaining why schools on the Heightened Cash Monitoring 2 and Reimbursement payment methods cannot make interim disbursements, and one explaining when schools can delay disbursing Title IV aid in cases where they are verifying items that they selected rather than the Department.

We changed the third bullet on page 95 to clarify that when a student fails to submit verification documentation, the school may not disburse or originate *any* additional Direct Loans, including subsidized, unsubsidized, and PLUS loans.

On page 96 we removed the margin note about the Quality Assurance Program, which has ended, and we added a margin note about when verification ends.

We added guidance to the second paragraph on page 113 clarifying that while it is generally correct that schools must complete verification before making professional judgment (PJ) changes, it is not necessary to verify information that will be completely removed as a result of PJ.

On page 116 we removed the body text about code 399 and the special conflicting information that arose between the 2016–2017 and 2017–2018 award years. But we modified and retained a relevant margin note since 399 codes will continue through the first half of 2018.

We added the second-to-last sentence in the first paragraph on page 117 to clarify that students who are younger than 24 may qualify for a homeless unaccompanied youth determination. We also removed the definition of “youth” in the margin and the last paragraph on page 118 because that guidance is now irrelevant.