
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 2019–2020

We added a paragraph on page 3 introducing a new electronic method for filling out and submitting the application: myFAFSA, which is one feature of the new myStudentAid app that is now available for mobile devices.

On page 9 we added a margin note directing readers to the *2020–21 Data Elements and Justification* document on the [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov) website for a complete list of the justifications for the questions on the FAFSA.

On pages 10 and 11 we added guidance about questions 21 and 22 of the FAFSA (student gender and Selective Service registration) to help FAAs with situations where students do not identify with their sex at birth.

We added guidance on page 27 explaining that guardianship of a person’s estate—which typically occurs when someone has been appointed to be guardian of a minor’s estate because the minor has or is about to receive money or property of substantial value—does **not** qualify as a legal guardianship for the purpose of making a student independent. If someone has only been appointed guardian of a student’s estate, the student would answer “No” to the relevant question on the FAFSA.

In the margin of page 79 we added text to the end of the note about Dear Colleague Letter GEN-17-08 advising that when schools experience local—rather than federally declared—disasters that affect their Title IV administration, they should contact their regional school participation division.

We added a sentence in the middle of page 82 advising that those who request tax transcripts should not do so before enough time has passed for the IRS to process the return, which takes 2 to 4 weeks for returns filed electronically and 6 to 8 weeks for those that were mailed.

We moved the notes pertaining to the tax transcript from the margin of page 82 to the body of pages 82 and 83 under the new heading “Using the tax transcript.” We also added the last paragraph to that section.

At the top of page 83 we noted that schools can become participants in the IRS’s Income Verification Express Service (IVES) as a way to receive tax return transcripts on students’ behalf. This will be a useful way for schools to continue to receive student transcripts directly from the IRS once it ceases in 2019 to provide transcripts to third parties via the 4506-T or 4506T-EZ form.

On pages 81–87 we modified the text in various places to account for new guidance, published in an announcement on January 9, 2019, pertaining to the use of the tax return and the IRS’s Verification of Nonfiling Letter.

We added a parenthetical phrase in the middle of page 87 emphasizing that non-tax filers who have an automatic zero EFC still must also follow the verification guidance for non-filers.

At the top of page 90 we added parenthetical phrases clarifying that the signature on the student’s statement of educational purpose must be a “wet” signature.

In the paragraph on page 90 about making updates as a consequence of a change in a student’s marital status, we added a sentence directing FAAs to first make the update and then verify the revised application if it was selected for verification.

On page 95, in the section on verification status codes, we noted that messages were sent to schools informing them of impending nullification of interim disbursements for 2018–2019 student records for which the “W” code has not been updated. We also added a sentence stating that a blank code also applies when a student receives an initial disbursement of aid on a transaction that is not selected for verification, but then a later transaction is selected and the student fails to complete verification.

We added the last sentence on page 115 referring to the IRS’s Interactive Tax Assistant, which is a helpful online tool that takes users through a series of questions to solve issues such as whether someone needs to file a return and what a person’s filing status should be.

Also on that page, we added a sentence to the margin note about marital and tax filing status. With the change to prior-prior year tax data on the FAFSA, there will likely be an increase in the relevant ISIR comment codes.