
2024–25

FAFSA[®] Specifications Guide

Introduction

December 2022

**U.S. Department of Education's
Federal Student Aid**



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Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CPS	Central Processing System
EDE	electronic data exchange
EFC	Expected Family Contribution
FAA	financial aid administrator
FAFSA	Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FPS	FAFSA Processing System
FSA	Federal Student Aid
ISIR	<i>Institutional Student Information Record</i>
NCAN	National College Attainment Network
SAI	Student Aid Index
SAR	<i>Student Aid Report</i>
SAIG	Student Aid Internet Gateway

Change History Table

The change history table below is updated each time the “Introduction” volume of the *FAFSA Specifications Guide* is updated providing you with a cumulative list of revisions made to the document.

The footer is updated to include the revised date. For example, if a change is made to page 5 in March 2023, the footer will show “Rev 3/23.”

Date	Page(s)	Changes/Notes
12/22	All	Introduction volume is released

Introduction

Overview of the *FAFSA Specifications Guide*

The former Central Processing System (CPS) was modernized and transitioned to the FAFSA Processing System (FPS). This ongoing, enormous initiative includes overhauling underlying system platform and architecture as well as restructuring our user documentation. Some of the user documentation has been reorganized into the *FAFSA Specifications Guide* and separated into volumes. Below you will find a description of each volume of the new specifications as well as a cross-reference table of the former documents.

The *FAFSA Specifications Guide* is designed to meet the reference needs of financial aid administrators (FAA), programmers and data processing staff who want to incorporate electronic Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) functionality into their institutional systems. If you are a programmer or data processing staff, you will likely reference all volumes. If you are an FAA, you will likely reference all volumes but volume 9. Volume 1 is also written for National College Attainment Network (NCAN) staff, Federal TRIO program staff, and guidance counselors.

Volume Descriptions

The *FAFSA Specifications Guide* volumes are described below:

Volume 1 – Summary of Changes – This volume describes processing changes for the new processing cycle. Information in this section is similar to the information in the former Summary of Changes to the Application Processing System.

Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help – This volume includes expected schedule releases, customer service help desks, mailing address, Web Demo information, helpful documents, and FSA websites. Information in this section is similar to the schedule information in the former Summary of Changes to the Application Processing System and the help information from other guides.

Volume 3 – Electronic Data Exchange and FAFSA Processing – This volume contains the information from Section 1, Overview and Section 2, EDE Processing from the former *EDE Technical Reference*. It describes FSA's software for the FPS and Student Aid Internet Gateway (SAIG), electronic data exchange input and output files, Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) files, and electronic corrections.

Volume 4 – Record Layouts and Processing Codes – This volume contains the information from Section 3, Record Layouts and Section 4, Processing Codes from the former *EDE Technical Reference* and other codes from the former *ISIR Guide*.

Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects – This volume contains the edits and reject information found in the *Application Processing System Specifications for Software Developers*, *EDE Technical Reference*, and *ISIR Guide*.

Volume 6 – ISIR Guide – The information in this volume comes from the former *ISIR Guide*.

Volume 7 – Comment Codes – The information in this section comes from the former *SAR Comment Codes and Text* guide.

Volume 8 – Agency Matches – The information in this section comes from the former *SAR Comment Codes and Text* guide.

Volume 9 – Testing and Web Demo System – This volume includes testing data and Web Demo System information that was in the *CPS Test System User Guide*.

User Documentation Cross-Reference Table

If you are looking for information from the former:	Look in the following <i>FAFSA Specifications Guide</i> volumes:
<i>Summary of Changes for the Application Processing System</i>	<i>Volume 1 – Summary of Changes</i> <i>Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i>
<i>EDE Technical Reference, Section 1 – Overview</i>	<i>Volume 3 – Electronic Data Exchange and FAFSA Processing</i> <i>Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i>
<i>EDE Technical Reference, Section 2 – EDE Processing</i>	<i>Volume 3 – Electronic Data Exchange and FAFSA Processing</i>
<i>EDE Technical Reference, Section 3 – Record Layouts</i>	<i>Volume 4 – Record Layouts and Processing Codes</i>
<i>EDE Technical Reference, Section 4 – Processing Codes</i>	<i>Volume 4 – Record Layouts and Processing Codes</i> <i>Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects</i>
<i>EDE Technical Reference, Section 5 – Printing</i>	Schools and state agencies are not required to print an ISIR, and if you choose to, there is no required format for printing the information. We no longer provide guidance for printing ISIRs.
<i>Application Processing System Specifications for Software Developers</i>	<i>Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects</i> <i>Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i>
<i>The ISIR Guide</i>	<i>Volume 6 – ISIR Guide</i> <i>Volume 4 – Record Layouts and Processing Codes</i> <i>Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects</i> <i>Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i> Schools and state agencies are not required to print an ISIR, and if you choose to, there is no required format for printing the information. The printing guidance provided in <i>The ISIR Guide</i> has also been removed. Also, the FPS will no longer send a SAR Acknowledgement to students.
<i>SAR Comment Codes and Text</i>	<i>Volume 7 – Comment Codes</i> <i>Volume 8 – Agency Matches</i> <i>Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i>
<i>CPS Test System User Guide</i>	<i>Volume 9 – Testing and Web Demo System</i> <i>Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i>
<i>EFC Formula Guide</i>	Because we no longer calculate an Expected Family Contribution (EFC), rather a Student Aid Index (SAI) using different criteria, the EFC Formula Guide will be replaced with a new guide explaining the SAI. That guide will not be part of the <i>FAFSA Specifications Guide</i> .

Planned Releases

Volume	Release
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Introduction</i>	December 2022 and as needed
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 1 – Summary of Changes</i>	Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help</i>	Early Summer 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 3 – Electronic Data Exchange and FAFSA Processing</i>	Early Summer 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 4 – Record Layouts and Processing Codes</i>	December 2022, Spring 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects</i>	Spring 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 6 – ISIR Guide</i>	Spring 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 7 – Comment Codes</i>	Summer 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 8 – Agency Matches</i>	Summer 2023 and Fall 2023
<i>FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 9 – Testing and Web Demo System</i>	Summer 2023 and Fall 2023