

Guide to Validating Institutional Student Informational Records (ISIRs)

Sept. 30, 2024

During the beta testing periods for the 2025–26 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) form, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) office of Federal Student Aid (FSA) encourages all institutions of higher education (IHEs) to validate ISIRs they receive and report any issues they may find through their regular channels. The tiers below represent groups of activities IHEs can complete that will enable FSA to fully validate 2025–26 ISIRs. The activities range from simply downloading and importing ISIRs to submitting corrections and packaging aid. FSA expects IHEs to begin with Tier One activities and work up to Tiers Four and Five.

While we encourage institutions to work through as many tiers as possible, **FSA recognizes that not every school has the ability to complete all listed items due to software readiness, staffing, and other factors.**

Tier One: Download ISIRs

1. Access your FTI-SAIG mailbox.
2. Download ISIR files.

Tier Two: Import ISIRs

1. Load ISIRs into your software's production or non-production environment.
2. View ISIRs in your software or custom tools to ensure layout generally looks correct.
3. Confirm you can access 2025–26 student records in the FAFSA Partner Portal (FPP).

Tier Three: Review ISIRs

These activities can be done in any order. Many activities require functional software, although financial aid professional can do some activities by looking at student records in FPP.

1. Run Student Aid Index calculations in your software and/or perform "hand calculations" to verify that calculations meet expectations based on the 2025–26 *Student Aid Index (SAI) and Pell Grant Eligibility Guide*.
2. Compare ISIR data with CSS Profile, Student Information System, or other queries/reports, if available.
3. Compare Federal Tax Information (FTI) with independently provided Internal Revenue Service (IRS) tax returns, if available.
4. Manually review Federal Pell Grant indicators and eligibility flags and other "internal logic" tasks. For example, comment codes and rejects, NSLDS® information, manual tax data compared to FTI data, and dependency status.
5. Manually review date-dependent logic, such as the automatic determination of dependency status based on the applicant's date of birth.
6. Highlight missing or inaccurate data, outliers, or additional student/contributor scenarios worth reviewing. Contributors without a Social Security number, students from Freely Associated States, etc.
7. Verify data used during processing—such as Veterans Administration, Social Security Administration, Department of Homeland Security, and TransUnion—against comment codes, and, if possible, independent source data.
8. Review ISIRs against your list of known issues.

Tier Four: Submit Corrections

1. Make corrections to student records in FPP.
2. Where relevant, try the functionality for dependency overrides, professional judgement, conflicting information, and FPS C Flags.

Tier Five: Package Aid

1. Run valid ISIRs through draft or actual packaging.
2. Validate that NSLDS® data looks as expected.
3. Verify Federal Work-Study data, when appropriate.
4. Confirm award amounts align with expectations.