2027–28

FAFSA® Specifications Guide

Introduction

May 2026

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

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Acronyms

Table I-1: Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
EDE	electronic data exchange
FAA	financial aid administrator
FAFSA®	*Free Application for Federal Student Aid*
FPS	FAFSA Processing System
FSA	Federal Student Aid
ISIR	*Institutional Student Information Record*
NCAN	National College Attainment Network

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 revision date.

Table I-2: Change History

Date	Page(s)	Changes/Notes
5/26	All	Introduction volume is released

Introduction

Overview of the *FAFSA Specifications Guide*

The *FAFSA Specifications Guide is* designed to meet the reference needs of financial aid administrators (FAAs), 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 the FAFSA Processing System (FPS) changes for the new processing cycle.

Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help – This volume contains important FPS processing deadlines and anticipated document and software release dates, as well as information for getting help such as contact information for customer service, FPS mailing addresses, and lists of helpful publications and websites you can access for additional assistance.

Volume 3 – Electronic Data Exchange and FAFSA Processing – This volume provides guidance to schools and other entities who want to develop mainframe systems or third-party software to exchange data electronically with Federal Student Aid. It includes an overview of the Electronic Data Exchange (EDE) process and our software products (EDExpress, EDconnect, and TDClient). Also included are descriptions of the FAFSA Processing System input data, electronic output data files (such as the *Institutional Student Information Record* [ISIR]), a review of the types of ISIR files available from the ISIR Datamart, and information for making electronic corrections to a student's FAFSA data.

Volume 4A – Record Layouts – This volume contains the record layouts you need to create your own software to participate in the EDE process, including the ISIR, correction record, and correction error report.

Excel ISIR – This document provides the ISIR Record Layout in a spreadsheet format. This layout is also included in *Volume 4A – Record Layouts*.

Volume 4B – Processing Codes – This volume provides tables of codes, messages, and data specifications to assist you in defining your system, submitting your data, and correcting errors or *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA®) data.

Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects – This volume contains descriptions of data edits for various FAFSA contributors (dependent or independent student, parent, parent spouse or partner, and student's spouse), as well as record-level, processing, verifiable, and non-verifiable reject codes, and resolution guidance. The edits are a collection of processing rules and requirements that are used to prevent illogical and inconsistent data and are also used to set rejects, comment codes, highlights, and other indicators used by data consumers to determine federal student aid eligibility.

Volume 6 – ISIR Guide – This volume is designed to assist FAAs with interpreting student information on the ISIR and FAFSA Submission Summary. The ISIR contains information reported on the FAFSA form, key processing results, and National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS®) information. The term ISIR refers to all processed student information records that are sent electronically to institutions by the FPS.

Volume 7 – Comment Codes – This volume contains comment code and text information for the FAFSA Submission Summary (electronic and paper) and ISIR, as well as any action required by the student or school.

Volume 8 – Agency Matches – This volume provides guidance regarding processed comment codes, status codes, and reject codes from matching agencies such the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Social Security Administration (SSA), the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), and NSLDS.

Volume 9 – Testing – This volume includes testing data information.

Planned Releases

Table I-3: Planned FSG Releases

Volume	Release
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Introduction	May 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 1 – Summary of Changes	July 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 2 – FPS Schedule and Getting Help	August 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 3 – Electronic Data Exchange and FAFSA Processing	August 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 4A – Record Layouts	May 2026
Excel ISIR Record Layout	May 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 4B –Processing Codes	May 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 5 – Edits and Rejects	July 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 6 – ISIR Guide	August 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 7 – Comment Codes	August 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 8 – Agency Matches	May 2026
FAFSA Specifications Guide, Volume 9 – Testing	August 2026