
CPS Test System User Guide

2023-2024

U.S. Department of Education



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Preface

About This Guide

The CPS Test System User Guide describes Federal Student Aid’s Central Processing System (CPS) Test System and the testing process. It provides testing instructions for the mainframe test environment, as well as instructions for using the CPS Web Applications Demonstration (Web Demo) System.

This guide assists staff members of schools and software development companies that create systems to exchange application and correction data with the CPS. State agencies can also refer to this guide when testing their systems’ ability to receive Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs).

This guide is also a resource for financial aid administrators (FAAs) and others in the financial aid community who are interested in using the Web Demo system for training purposes. Users of the Web Demo system can complete and submit sample *FAFSA on the Web* (FOTW) applications, as well as make corrections. In addition, financial aid administrators can use the Web Demo system to train their staff on FAA Access to CPS Online.

If you have questions, see “Getting Help” in this guide for technical support options.

Holiday Closings for the 2023-2024 Processing Cycle

The CPS Test System does not process data on the holidays listed in the tables below, but data can be submitted on those dates. A network message will be sent to notify you when closings are scheduled.

Holiday	2022	2023	2024
New Year's Day	Friday, December 31, 2021	Monday, January 2 (observed)	Monday, January 1
Martin Luther King's Birthday	Monday, January 17	Monday, January 16	Monday, January 15
Washington's Birthday	Monday, February 21	Monday, February 20	Monday, February 19
Memorial Day	Monday, May 30	Monday, May 29	Monday, May 27
Juneteenth National Independence Day	Monday, June 20 (observed)	Monday, June 19	Wednesday, June 19
Independence Day	Monday, July 4	Tuesday, July 4	Thursday, July 4
Labor Day	Monday, September 5	Monday, September 4	Monday, September 2
Columbus Day	Monday, October 10	Monday, October 9	Monday, October 14
Veterans Day	Friday, November 11	Friday, November 10 (observed)	Monday, November 11
Thanksgiving Day	Thursday, November 24	Thursday, November 23	Thursday, November 28
Christmas Day	Monday, December 26 (observed)	Monday, December 25	Wednesday, December 25

CPS Test System

Overview

What can be tested on the CPS Test System?

The CPS Test System includes two testing environments: a mainframe test environment (accessed through the Student Aid Internet Gateway [SAIG]) and a Web demo system.

Testing is optional; ED does not require it. The CPS Test System is a tool for you to use to ensure that your processing system interfaces properly with the CPS.

Mainframe Test System

The mainframe portion of the CPS Test System is designed to test application and correction data processing between your system and the CPS outside the production environment.

You can use CPS test files of application records and matching ISIRs, or you can create and submit your own application test records.

To submit *only* test correction records you have created, you must call CPS/SAIG Technical Support (see “Getting Help” in this guide) to request record IDs that will process successfully in the CPS Test System. At the end of each processing day, the test database tables are cleared, and we restore the original data needed for correction processing.

Note: We recommend you test your correction process.

Issues Log

We will post an issues log listing issues or changes made to the Mainframe Test System. Each entry in the log includes the date the item was identified, resolved, or resulted in a change. The log is updated throughout the cycle when changes are made to the system. It includes the status of resolved and unresolved issues so that you can easily determine if and when previously identified issues were resolved. It also indicates whether the specifications or test cases have been updated for 2023-2024.

The Issues Log is available on Federal Student Aid’s Knowledge Center Web site, located at fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center. Go to the [Software and Other Tools](#) page, scroll to and click **CPS Test System**, and select **2023-2024** under the “By Award Year” list. Under the “Documentation” list, click the most recent date-specific link associated with “CPS Test System Issues Log” to access the page where you can download the Issues Log.

Web Demo System

This portion of the CPS Test System contains demonstration versions of both the FOTW and FAA Access to CPS Online Web sites, allowing users to complete and submit sample FOTW applications in a test environment.

The FOTW Demo site can be used to simulate the electronic application entry process for parents and students or as an aid in training financial aid administrators to help students complete electronic applications. Financial aid administrators can also use the Web Demo system to become familiar with FAA Access to CPS Online and train their staff to use the system.

See page 13 of this user guide for a complete description of the Web Demo system.

CPS Test System Availability

Mainframe Test System

On September 25, 2022, the 2023-2024 mainframe test system will begin running in addition to the 2022-2023 system. Test data submissions for 2023-2024 will not be processed until after the CPS begins processing data on October 1, 2022.

Note: Test files will be available in September 2022. Changes identified after files are posted will be incorporated into future postings as they are resolved. Issues with the files will be documented in the Issues Log posted with the test files.

Web Demo Site

The CPS Web Applications Demonstration (Web Demo) System (fafsademo.test.ed.gov) will be available on September 25, 2022. Federal Student Aid will post an electronic announcement confirming the site is available for 2023-2024.

Getting Started

Steps for Getting Started

1. Obtain a Destination Point Number

To use the CPS Test System, you must be able to transmit data over the SAIG. To do this, you must be enrolled as a destination point. Destination points are designated by a TG number assigned by Federal Student Aid (FSA). If you need a destination point number (also called a TG number), enroll online at the SAIG enrollment Web site:

fsawebenroll.ed.gov

CPS/SAIG Technical Support will mail you a TG number. Your TG number consists of seven characters: the letters TG followed by a five-digit numeric or alphanumeric ID. The TG number identifies your school as a destination point and enables you to exchange data with the CPS.

When your destination point number has been created, you can then register for an FSA User ID on the SAIG enrollment Web site. An FSA User ID is required for access to FAA Access to CPS Online; however, it is not required to access the CPS Test System.

For information on becoming a destination point or about FSA User IDs, contact CPS/SAIG Technical Support at:

800/330-5947

E-mail: CPSSAIG@ed.gov

2. Download the Electronic Data Exchange Technical Reference

The *2023-2024 Electronic Data Exchange (EDE) Technical Reference* contains the electronic application and correction record layouts you will need to create data records and develop your system as specified by the CPS. It also contains the ISIR record layout and other information needed to format your data correctly.

The *EDE Technical Reference* is available in Adobe PDF format on the Knowledge Center Web site.

To download this document:

1. Go to fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center.
2. Click **Resource Type** in the Library section of the Knowledge Center home page.
3. In the **Publications by Resource Type** list, click **System Technical References**.
4. On the **Current** tab of the System Technical References page, scroll to and click the electronic announcement link for the most recent 2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference publication by date.
5. Scroll to the **Attachments** section at the end of the electronic announcement to locate the individual downloadable sections of the technical reference.
6. Click the link to each section. Use Adobe Acrobat Reader or a similar PDF-compatible program to view and print the document.

The CPS Test Process

Steps for the CPS Test Process

1. Create or Request Data

To use the CPS Test System, you must create test application records or request Social Security Number (SSN) IDs to create your correction records. You can create test application records in three ways: download and use the CPS test application and ISIR files, download and use the CPS test application file as a template, or create your own application data. All application data transmitted to the CPS test system must be formatted according to the appropriate record layout in the *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference*.

The *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference* is available for download in Adobe PDF format on the Knowledge Center Web site. See “Getting Started” earlier in this user guide for instructions.

Application Data for Testing

The three ways to create test application records follow.

Download and Use the CPS Test Application and ISIR Files

You can download a file of simulated test application data from the Knowledge Center Web site, along with its corresponding test ISIR file. The test file contains approximately 3,000 records.

In the test application data file, use the method described in the “SSNs for Application Test Records” section later in this guide to change the simulated SSNs to identify them as specific to your destination point. The data on the ISIRs you receive should match the test ISIR file you downloaded.

To download the test application data file:

1. Go to fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center.
2. Click the Topics link on the top menu bar of the Knowledge Center home page, then select the **Software and Other Tools** link under “Featured Topics.”
3. On the Software and Other Tools page, click **CPS Test System**.
4. Under the **By Award Year** list, click **2023-2024**.
5. Click the most recent link associated with “CPS Test System Electronic Application Test Data.”

6. Scroll to the **Attachments** section at the end of the electronic announcement to locate the downloadable data file, which you can open or save.

Download and Use the CPS Test Application File as a Template

You can download the file of test application data from the Knowledge Center Web site and use it as a template to create your own application data.

Be sure to change the SSNs using the method described in the “SSNs for Application Test Records” section.

Remember, if you change any of the data in the test records other than the SSN, the resulting ISIRs will not match the CPS test ISIR file. You would need to check your results manually.

To download the test application data file, follow the instructions above in the “Download and Use the CPS Test Application and ISIR Files” section.

Create Your Own Application Data

If you prefer, you can create your own unique application test data according to the record layout specifications in the *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference*. If you choose this method, you must manually check the ISIRs you receive.

To download Section 3 (Record Layouts) of the 2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference:

1. Go to fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center.
2. Click **Resource Type** in the Library section of the Knowledge Center home page.
3. In the **Publications by Resource Type** list, click **System Technical References**.
4. On the **Current** tab of the System Technical References page, scroll to and click the electronic announcement link for the most recent 2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference publication by date.
5. Scroll to the end of the electronic announcement to locate the individual downloadable sections of the technical reference.
6. Click the link to **Section 3: Record Layouts in PDF format** (additional information is provided about the file size and section page count).
7. Use Adobe Acrobat Reader or a similar PDF-compatible program to view and print the document.

SSNs for Application Test Records

Each test record must contain a simulated SSN. The first five characters of this simulated SSN must be your destination code (TG number). This ensures the test data you are submitting is unique to your destination point.

All characters in simulated SSNs must be numeric. If your TG number begins with “A,” use “1” for the first character in your simulated SSNs. If it begins with “B,” use “2.”

We recommend using the remaining four characters to number the records sequentially. Here are some examples.

If your TG number is 72420, the SSNs of your first five application records could be:	If your TG number is A0001, the SSNs of your first five application records could be:
724200001	100010001
724200002	100010002
724200003	100010003
724200004	100010004
724200005	100010005

You can create and transmit as many application test records as you want.

If you plan to submit multiple files of electronic applications on the same day, use unique simulated SSNs for the students in all the files you submit on that day. Test records are cleared from the database each evening, so you can use the same set of simulated SSNs again the next day. The CPS runs the process once a day, excluding holidays and weekends.

School Codes for Application Test Records

A Federal School Code must be provided in the first school code position of each record. You can include a school code in positions 2 through 10 if you choose.

For each record sent and processed, you will receive one ISIR back in one of the following message classes:

TDAP24OP – Daily Application ISIRs initiated from your destination point

TGCO24OP – Daily Correction ISIRs initiated from your destination point

For message class names, see “Import Data to Your System” on page 10.

Correction Data for Testing

For correction records, you must contact CPS/SAIG Technical Support to obtain the SSNs for a series of test correction records that are already in the CPS test database. You can request up to 25 correction SSNs.

You can contact CPS/SAIG Technical Support at:

800/330-5947

E-mail: CPSSAIG@ed.gov

If you are submitting multiple corrections for your assigned correction IDs in a single day (whether in different batches or in the same batch), you must use the same Federal School Code in the correction for that SSN. The Federal School Code is located in field 52 (positions 649 to 654) of the electronic correction record layout in the *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference*.

2. Export Data from Your System

After your test data is formatted according to the specifications in the Record Layouts section of the *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference*, transmit the data through the SAIG using these message classes:

Applications	TAPS24IN
Corrections	TCOR24IN

The CPS processes the records it receives once a day, usually in the morning.

3. Import Data to Your System

After the CPS processes your test application files, it returns the data to your SAIG mailbox. The data is identified with these message classes:

Application ISIRs	TDAP24OP
Correction ISIRs	TGCO24OP

If your input files contain data outside of the CPS processing specifications, the CPS will not process your files. Instead, associated error files are placed in your SAIG mailbox for you to retrieve. The data is identified with these message classes:

Application errors	TAPE24OP
Correction errors	TCOE24OP

Use the Processing Codes section of the *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference* to help you resolve the errors you receive in these files.

4. Review Test Results

Each school uses different systems and has different reasons for testing. You can conduct testing at your convenience, and the results are for your use only.

If you used:

- **The CPS test input file and changed only the SSNs**, you can check your results with the CPS test ISIR file. Both the test input file and the test ISIR file are available on the Knowledge Center Web site.
- **The CPS test input file and changed the SSNs and other data** in the file, you must check the resulting ISIRs manually.
- **Data you created** using the *2023-2024 EDE Technical Reference* record layouts, you must check the resulting ISIRs manually.

Match Data

The match agency data on the test ISIRs is simulated data. It does not compromise any student's personally identifiable information (PII) protected by the Privacy Act.

State Agency Testing

Steps for State Agency Testing

1. Download Test ISIRs

State agencies can test their systems by downloading a file of test ISIRs from the Knowledge Center Web site.

To download the file of test ISIRs:

1. Go to fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center.
2. Click the Topics link on the top menu bar of the Knowledge Center home page, then select the **Software and Other Tools** link under “Featured Topics.”
3. On the Software and Other Tools page, select **CPS Test System**.
4. Under the **By Award Year** list, click **2023-2024**.
5. Click the most recent link associated with “CPS Test System Electronic Application Test Data.”
6. Scroll to the **Attachments** section at the end of the electronic announcement to locate the downloadable data file, which you can open or save.

2. Conduct Tests as Needed

After downloading the test ISIR file of approximately 3,000 records, you can use the test data as you choose. Since testing is not required, you can conduct the testing at your convenience.

Import the data into your system and review it to ensure the data is displayed correctly and used appropriately by your system.

Match Data

The match agency data on the test ISIRs is simulated data. It does not compromise any student’s personally identifiable information (PII) protected by the Privacy Act.

CPS Web Applications Demonstration System

What is the CPS Web Applications Demonstration System?

The CPS Web Applications Demonstration (Web Demo) System (fafsademo.test.ed.gov) provides access to demonstration versions of FOTW and FAA Access to CPS Online, which are preloaded with test data for your use. It offers most of the features of the production versions of the sites, except that no data is processed. On the Web Demo system, you can perform the functions listed below.

Both the current and prior cycle's versions of our Web sites are available in the demonstration system. Pre-loaded demonstration data is available for both award years.

FAFSA on the Web

- Complete and submit a sample FAFSA®
- Make corrections
- Check application status
- Sign applications electronically
- Search for Federal School Codes
- View and print SAR information

FAA Access to CPS Online

- View and print processed student data
- Apply signatures to records in a signature hold status
- Compare ISIRs
- Enter applications and make corrections
- Request ISIRs
- Enter student identification verification results

The Web Demo system serves as a tool for financial aid administrators to demonstrate FOTW to students and parents. Financial aid office staff can also use the site to learn about FAA Access to CPS Online, as well as FOTW.

To access the FOTW demo site, click the link on the fafsademotest.ed.gov home page.

All entered data is cleared from the database each evening. The site is unavailable on Sundays from 5 a.m. to 11 a.m. ET due to regularly scheduled maintenance.

Accessing the FAA Access to CPS Online Demo Site

To log in to the FAA Access to CPS Online Demo site, select the **FAA Access to CPS Online Demo System** button on the home page and click **OK**.

To access specific functions within FAA Access to CPS Online, you need a destination code and a Federal School Code.

For the Destination Code, type: **TG99999**

For the Federal School Code, type: **001002**

Getting Help

Sources of Assistance

Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC)

The Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) serves the public with information about the federal student aid application process. FSAIC customer service representative support is provided in English and Spanish. Customers include students, parents, and FAAs seeking general information about federal grant and loan programs and assistance with the FAFSA (paper and FAFSA on the Web versions, including FSA ID and password assistance) and student aid processing timeframes.

Types of FSAIC assistance include: FAFSA status checks, completion of FAFSA and FAFSA corrections, requests to change addresses and Federal School Codes on the FAFSA, duplicate SAR requests, identification of holders of existing student loans (including contact information), Federal Student Aid publication fulfillment, and assisting the student with NSLDS's loan and TEACH Grant exit counseling sessions.

800/4-FED-AID (800/433-3243) or 334/523-2691

Representatives are available Monday through Friday from 8 a.m. to 11 p.m. and on Saturday and Sunday from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. ET. During peak processing periods, representatives are available during extended hours which may include certain Saturdays and Sundays. FSAIC is closed on federal holidays with a few exceptions.

CPS/SAIG Technical Support

You can get help with the FAA Access to CPS Online Demo site and the CPS Test System by contacting CPS/SAIG Technical Support at:

800/330-5947

E-mail: CPSSAIG@ed.gov

Hours of operation are 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday.

FSATECH

FSATECH is an e-mail listserv for technical questions about Federal Student Aid systems, software, and mainframe products.

For information on subscribing to FSATECH, go to:

ed.gov/offices/OSFAP/services/fsatechsubscribe.html