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Process Guide for  
**Student Web Application  
Products**

FAFSA4caster  
PIN Web Site  
FAFSA on the Web

**2010-2011**

U.S. Department of Education



F E D E R A L  
S T U D E N T A I D

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# Introduction

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## Overview

The *Student Web Application Products Process Guide* is designed to provide financial aid administrators (FAAs) with detailed information about changes and enhancements to Federal Student Aid's Web-based products for students:

- FAFSA4caster
- PIN Web site
- Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on the Web

Using the English or Spanish FAFSA4caster Web site at [fafsa4caster.ed.gov](http://fafsa4caster.ed.gov), students and parents can receive an early eligibility estimate for federal student aid. This Web site provides users with an opportunity to increase their knowledge of the financial aid process, become familiar with the various types of federal student aid that are available, and investigate other aid sources, such as grants and scholarships.

Using the PIN Web site or Spanish PIN Web site at [pin.ed.gov](http://pin.ed.gov), students and parents can apply for a PIN, request a duplicate PIN, or change their PINs. Students and parents can create their own PINs, request that Federal Student Aid generate and display PINs on the Web page in real-time, request that PINs be e-mailed in real-time, or have PINs sent through postal mail. For all options except postal mail distribution, we issue PINs in real-time so the student or parent can use it immediately to sign an original application electronically, decreasing processing time dramatically.

Using the FAFSA on the Web site at [fafsa.gov](http://fafsa.gov), students can apply for aid using FAFSA on the Web or Spanish FAFSA on the Web. Using the Federal Student Aid PIN, students can check their financial aid application status, view their Student Aid Report (SAR) information, correct their application information, and electronically sign their applications. A parent can also use his or her PIN to sign his or her child's financial aid application electronically.

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## Suggestions from the Financial Aid Community

Federal Student Aid continually seeks new and innovative ways to make applying for financial aid over the Web easier and more convenient for students and their families. We are making numerous enhancements to our student Web application products for 2010-2011, as detailed in this process guide. You, your colleagues, and student aid applicants suggested some of these changes.

If you have ideas for additional enhancements, let us know by sending an e-mail to [FederalStudentAidCustomerService@ed.gov](mailto:FederalStudentAidCustomerService@ed.gov).

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## Demonstration Site

The FAFSA on the Web demonstration site is a training tool for students, parents, and your financial aid staff. The demonstration site is available for use at [fafsademotest.ed.gov](http://fafsademotest.ed.gov) with 2010-2011 options accessible by mid-December 2009.

Use the following login information to access the Web site:

- User Name: eddemo
- Password: fafsatest

**Note:** The user name and password fields are case-sensitive.

The demonstration Web site offers most features of the production Web sites for FAFSA on the Web and FAA Access to CPS Online.

# What's New for 2010-2011?

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## FAFSA4caster Changes and Enhancements

This section describes changes and enhancements implemented for FAFSA4caster in July 2009.

### FAFSA4caster Synchronized with FAFSA on the Web

We updated FAFSA4caster in July 2009 to reflect the annual FAFSA changes introduced to FAFSA on the Web in January 2009. The changes included 2009-2010 modifications to the FAFSA data elements (for example, new dependency status, worksheet income and financial information, and dislocated worker status questions). We also updated FAFSA4caster to use the 2009-2010 FAFSA on the Web expected family contribution (EFC) formulas and grant and loan limits to estimate financial aid eligibility.

### FAFSA4caster Redesign

We redesigned FAFSA4caster to simplify the FAFSA4caster experience for students and their parents.

Much of the informational and instructional text has been hidden, to be used only when needed. Hidden text can be retrieved by selecting links to open dialog boxes or by hovering over a question mark symbol to reveal flyover tool tip text.

We expanded the left navigation bar to identify the topic of each Web page and to indicate whether the questions pertain to the student or the student's parents. This enables the student to navigate within the application more freely and easily judge how many pages remain.

Finally, we now provide page-by-page editing. If we detect incomplete or conflicting data when a student proceeds to the next page, we display a complete list of messages and alerts for the page. The student must resolve incomplete or conflicting data before he or she can continue.

## **Account Setup Process**

FAFSA4caster no longer requires personally identifiable information (name, Social Security Number, date of birth) during the authentication process. Instead, we ask students to create an account by entering a user name and a password, selecting a challenge question, and entering an answer to the challenge question. After creating an account, a returning student can use his or her account information to access a saved form.

Personally identifiable information fields are now labeled as optional and a student can complete the form and obtain an estimate of his or her federal student aid eligibility without providing personally identifiable information. Although optional, providing personally identifiable information has advantages and we advise the student of the advantages. The advantages include enabling the student to obtain his or her Federal Student Aid PIN (if he or she does not have one), receive a timely reminder to fill out a FAFSA for the next school year, and save time by using his or her FAFSA4caster information to pre-fill a FAFSA.

If a student saved his or her form by providing personally identifiable information and selecting a password (before FAFSA4caster accounts were available), he or she can still access the form by entering the personally identifiable information and password on file. We simultaneously ask the student to create an account by entering a user name, selecting a challenge question, and entering an answer to the challenge question.

## **Self-Reported Cost of Attendance**

FAFSA4caster now provides users with two options for calculating estimated federal student aid eligibility. When answering the Student's College Plans questions, the student or parent can choose to use the national average cost of attendance based on the housing plans, residency status, program length, and type of school (public or private) he or she selected or to use his or her own specific cost of attendance when calculating student aid eligibility. If the student chooses to calculate eligibility using a self-reported cost of attendance, the student is prompted to enter a dollar amount for the cost of attendance, which FAFSA4caster applies to calculate the estimated federal student aid eligibility.

## **Compare Estimated Award Packages**

We added an option to the Student's College Plans in FAFSA4caster that enables a student to compare scenarios for estimated award packages for two colleges. If selected, the Estimated Federal Student Aid Eligibility results provide a side-by-side comparison between two college planning options that were selected by the student when answering the Student's College Plans questions.

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## **PIN Web Site Changes and Enhancements**

This section describes two changes that we implemented for the PIN Web site in September 2009 and a third change that will be implemented prior to January 2010.

### **Deactivated PIN Message**

In September 2009, we began displaying new message text to applicants who attempt to use a deactivated PIN while we are verifying their information with the Social Security Administration (SSA). This occurs if the applicant's PIN was deactivated soon after he or she used it to submit an application and he or she attempts to use it again before the initial match with the SSA is completed.

To secure applicant data, we continue to deactivate an applicant's PIN if his or her PIN or Challenge Answer is entered incorrectly too many times. If an applicant attempts to use a deactivated PIN, we still prompt the applicant to reestablish his or her PIN (when deactivated because the PIN was entered incorrectly too many times) or to apply for a new PIN (when deactivated because the Challenge Answer was entered incorrectly too many times).

This message text has resulted in a small number of applicants being prompted to take an action that is unavailable to them because neither the "Reestablish My PIN" nor the "Apply For A New PIN" action is available to an applicant while his or her information is being verified with the SSA. The message text implemented in September 2009 provides more specific instructions to these applicants by prompting the applicant to take the requisite action after the SAA match is completed.

### **Social Security Number (SSN) Replaced on PIN Application Confirmation Page**

To enhance the security of an applicant's personal data, we no longer display or print the student's SSN on the PIN Application Confirmation page. In September 2009, we replaced the SSN with a PIN Reference Number that shows the exact date and time we processed the applicant's request. The PIN Reference Number is displayed as a series of numbers that represent the month, day, year, hour, minute, and second the page was created.

## Virtual Keyboard

Prior to January 2010, we will implement a virtual keyboard for the PIN Web site to improve security when students and parents are entering personally identifiable information. The virtual keyboard will be presented directly below the SSN and Date of Birth entry fields and will enable a student or parent to enter his or her SSN and Date of Birth using a mouse instead of a standard keyboard. The value can be entered by clicking on the virtual keyboard character with the mouse or by holding the cursor over the key for 2 seconds.

Using the virtual keyboard will help prevent a malicious source from capturing the applicant's keystrokes and later accessing the application using the applicant's login information.

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# FAFSA on the Web Changes and Enhancements

In this section, we describe changes and enhancements to the FAFSA on the Web site for 2010-2011. We recommend that you review the information provided in the *2010-2011 Summary of Changes for the Application Processing System* guide, posted to the IFAP ([ifap.ed.gov](http://ifap.ed.gov)) and FSAdownload ([fsadownload.ed.gov](http://fsadownload.ed.gov)) Web sites in November 2009, for a complete description of changes to the application processing system for 2010-2011. Here we describe the changes as they relate to FAFSA on the Web.

## FAFSA on the Web Redesign

We redesigned FAFSA on the Web to provide enhanced navigation and other features that simplify the application process. The new FAFSA on the Web design uses additional skip logic to reduce the number of questions many students must answer, to decrease the number of entry pages presented to applicants, and to shorten the overall length of the application. We encourage you to visit the FAFSA on the Web Demonstration site to become familiar with the new design and other features such as:

- Dynamic question labels, help text, and instructions based on applicant profile (for example, marital status, responses to tax filing status, and type of tax return filed),
- Clear identification of student and parent sections of the application,
- Status indicators to guide applicants through the Web modules (for example, student demographics, basic eligibility, and dependency status), and
- Enhanced display of help text, alert and status messages, and instructions.

## Data Element Changes

Due to legislative changes and annual enhancements, we made the following changes to the data elements presented in the FAFSA on the Web:

- **Added Student/Parent Cooperative Education Program Earnings Fields** – Legislative changes mandate that we exclude Cooperative Education Program (co-op) earnings in the calculation of the EFC. To account for this new requirement, we have added student and parent co-op data elements to the Financial Information Web pages that collect income exclusions.

- **Removed Veterans Benefits and Type of Veterans Benefits** –As a result of legislative changes, beginning with the 2009-2010 award year veterans education benefits are no longer considered to be estimated financial assistance when determining a student’s eligibility for Title IV aid. This legislative change occurred after the release of the 2009-2010 online FAFSA; therefore, the veteran questions continue to be asked on the 2009-2010 application. They should not be considered when awarding Title IV aid in 2009-2010, however. For 2010-2011 we are removing the “Will you receive veterans education benefits” and “What type of veterans education benefits will you receive” questions from FAFSA on the Web.
- **Revised Marital Status Responses** – To facilitate the upcoming Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Data Retrieval process, we modified the valid response values for the Student’s Marital Status question. The first response, which previously stated “I am single, divorced, or widowed,” is now split into a revised first response, “I am single,” and a new fourth response, “I am divorced or widowed.” The second and third responses remain “I am married/remarried” and “I am separated,” respectively. As a result, there are now four responses to this question.
- **Marital Status Date Response Now Required** – To facilitate the upcoming IRS Data Retrieval process, we now require a response to the Student’s Marital Status Date if the response to Student’s Marital Status is not single. We also require a response to the Parents’ Marital Status Date if the response to Parents’ Marital Status is not single.
- **Added “As of the day you submitted your FAFSA” to Corrections on the Web Questions** – The FAFSA is intended to be a snapshot of the student and parents’ financial situation “as of the date” they submitted their FAFSA. To make it clearer to students and parents that they should not update information on the FAFSA, we are adding wording to Corrections on the Web questions that reminds them that the answers to the FAFSA questions should be as of the date they submitted their FAFSA. Students and parents should not change their answers to these questions unless the information originally submitted was incorrect as of the date the application was submitted. We added the wording “as of the day you submitted your FAFSA,” to the following questions:
  - Your marital status
  - What is your (and your spouse’s) total current balance of cash, savings, and checking accounts?
  - What is the net worth of your (and your spouse’s) current investments?
  - What is the net worth of your (and your spouse’s) current businesses and/or investment farms?
  - Are you married?
  - What is your parents’ marital status?
  - Is either of your parents a dislocated worker?

- What is your parents' total current balance of cash, savings, and checking accounts?
- What is the net worth of your parents' current investments?
- What is the net worth of your parents' current businesses and/or investment farms?
- Are you or your (spouse) a dislocated worker?

## Changes to Data Edits

We have changed the way we display edit messages for FAFSA Entry. We have also added and modified several FAFSA Entry and Corrections Entry edits. The significant edit changes are described below.

- **Edit Alerts and Messages** – For 2010-2011, we display alerts and messages as a bulleted list in a text box at the top of the Web page when an applicant encounters a FAFSA Entry data edit. An error icon (a red box marked with an x) is displayed to the left of each data field in question and the applicant must resolve the edit to continue.
- **Marital Status or Marital Status Date** – When an applicant changes his or her response to the Student's or Parents' Marital Status or Marital Status Date in Corrections Entry, we display a new edit message. The message advises the applicant that these answers should only be changed if they were reported incorrectly on the day the FAFSA was originally submitted or if a financial aid administrator has instructed the applicant to update the information. The applicant is encouraged to correct his or her answer to resolve the edit, but if he or she confirms the new answer(s), we set SAR Comment 302 or 308 for the student or parents, respectively, and highlight the affected fields on the SAR or ISIR.
- **Asset Questions** – When a response for any of the three asset questions (Total of cash, checking and saving accounts, Net worth of current investments, or Net worth of businesses/investment farms) is missing for the student or parents, we display error icons to the left of all three questions in FAFSA on the Web. In prior years, all asset fields for the student or parents needed to be blank for this reject error, Reject 1, to be set.

## Enhanced Security

For 2010-2011, we are implementing a virtual keyboard for FAFSA on the Web to improve security when students and parents are entering personally identifiable information. The virtual keyboard can be opened and closed by selecting a keyboard icon and enables a student or parent to enter his or her SSN and Date of Birth using a mouse instead of a standard keyboard.

Using the virtual keyboard will help prevent a malicious source from capturing the applicant's keystrokes and later accessing the application using the applicant's login information.

In addition, we continue to limit the print and display of the student's SSN. We made three enhancements related to SSN masking to FAFSA on the Web for 2010-2011:

- **Replaced SSN Next to Student's Name and in the Barcode on Signature Pages with a Cross-cycle Identifier** – We replaced the student's SSN to the right of the student's name with a cross-cycle identifier. The cross-cycle identifier is now embedded in the FAFSA on the Web and Corrections on the Web signature page bar codes.
- **Replaced SSN and Name ID on Confirmation Pages with a Cross-cycle Identifier** – The student's cross-cycle identifier is now used in place of the student's SSN and Name ID components of the confirmation number on FAFSA on the Web and Corrections on the Web Confirmation pages.
- **"888" SSNs No Longer Masked on Reports** – We no longer mask 888-series SSNs for FAFSA on the Web and Corrections on the Web Application Summary reports and Application Print reports. Students who are noncitizens residing in the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Island, or Republic of Palau are asked to enter "888" in the Student SSN data field to obtain a systematically assigned SSN substitute. As substitute SSNs, the 888-series SSNs do not contain personally identifiable information and do not require protection. Printing the number in the reports will enable the student to retain a record of the assigned number and share it with his or her FAA.

## Renewal FAFSA Data Elements

We made the following changes to the data elements used to pre-fill applications for students who are renewal-eligible in 2010-2011:

- We carry forward the 2009-2010 response to the dependency status questions with the exception of three that relate to homelessness. We will not carry forward the 2009-2010 response for the following questions because the questions identify dependency status situations that are likely to change from one year to the next:
  - At any time on or after July 1, 2009, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
  - At any time on or after July 1, 2009, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?
  - At any time on or after July 1, 2009, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

- We no longer convert the student's response to the "At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court?" question since the question is the same for both years.
- We added a data conversion for Student's Marital Status to set 2009-2010 responses of "I am single, divorced, or widowed" to blank for 2010-2011 because the valid response values have changed.

# Getting Help

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## How Do I Get Help?

If you have any questions regarding the information in this guide, contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center for assistance by calling 800/4-FED-AID (800/433-3243), TDD/TTY 800/730-8913, or by sending an e-mail to [FederalStudentAidCustomerService@ed.gov](mailto:FederalStudentAidCustomerService@ed.gov).