

The Application Process: FAFSAsm to ISIR

The law governing the SFA programs requires that applications be submitted on a form provided by the Department, and that no fee be charged for filing the form or for processing. Consequently, the form is named the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” (FAFSA) and its on-line version is named “FAFSA on the Web.”

To be considered for aid from most SFA programs, a student must complete a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA). The exception is PLUS loans—if a student wants to receive a PLUS loan, the student’s parents will need to complete a loan application and promissory note, but the student will not have to file a FAFSA unless his or her school requires the application. The FAFSA collects financial and other information used to calculate an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) and to confirm some of the eligibility requirements through computer matches with other agencies.

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Students can apply electronically through their schools (Electronic Data Exchange), on the Web (FAFSA on the Web), or by using a computer and a modem (FAFSA Express). They can also use a paper FAFSA. Students who have applied in previous years may also be able to use a simplified form, the Renewal FAFSA. Renewal FAFSAs can be completed through EDE, on the Web, or on paper.

Electronic Data Exchange (EDE)

If your school is going to submit the student’s application information through its EDE software, you should first have the student complete and sign a paper FAFSA. The aid office can then electronically enter the data from the paper FAFSA and submit it to the application processor through EDConnect software. For assistance with your EDConnect software, call 1-800-330-5947.

FAFSA on the Web (English and Spanish)

Your students can use *FAFSA on the Web* to complete a FAFSA on-line and submit it directly to the FAFSA processing system. Students can also correct any of their previously submitted data, except for SSN and date of birth. The web address is www.fafsa.ed.gov. The web site also explains which web browsers currently can be used with *FAFSA on the Web*. For assistance in using *FAFSA on the Web*, a student can call 1-800-801-0576.

PROCESSING THE FAFSA

FAFSA Processor

- paper FAFSAs only

Central Processing System

- receives FAFSA data directly from FAFSA on the Web, FAFSA Express, and EDE Express
- also receives receives data from FAFSA processor
- matches applicant data with INS, Social Security, Selective Service, Veterans Affairs
- calculates EFC
- mails SAR to student and transmits ISIR to schools

Exception to FAFSA filing requirement

 **New: Free help calls & CPS/WAN Technical Support**
On April 2, 2001, the TIVWAN number, 1-800-615-1189, will be merged with the CPS help line:

CPS/WAN Technical Support
1-800-330-5947
CPSWAN@ncs.com

Schools will not be charged for CPS/WAN help calls.

Advantages of Electronic Filing

All the methods of electronic application share the following benefits:

- *Faster processing than paper applications*
- *Fewer rejected application or other errors, because internal and end-of-entry data edits ensure that all required fields are completed and all conflicting data is resolved prior to submission*
- *Skip logic, which helps “shorten” the form by allowing applicants to skip over questions that don’t pertain to them*
- *Availability of online help*



Web sites for students

FAFSA on the Web

Corrections on the Web

Renewal FAFSA on the Web

<http://www.fafsa.ed.gov>

PIN Web site

<http://pin.ed.gov>

Paper FAFSA

The paper FAFSA is still used by many students who don't have access to the Web. Students can get a copy of the FAFSA by calling the Federal Student Aid Information Center (1-800-433-3243, aka 1-800-4 FED AID). You can also order bulk quantities of the FAFSA for your financial aid office, to distribute on your campus or through outreach events. Go to ifap.ed.gov to access our on-line ordering system.

The FAFSA includes an envelope with the mailing address for the processor, and a return-postcard to confirm that the application was received by the processor. However, in both cases the student needs to supply the stamp.

Renewal FAFSA

Many students won't have to complete an entire FAFSA, but can use a Renewal FAFSA instead. Most of the data from the FAFSA the student filed the year before will already be filled in. The student should review each item, correct those that have changed, and provide new information for a small number of items. The Renewal FAFSA can be submitted by schools through EDE or by students on the Web or on paper.

Most students who applied for federal student aid in 2000-2001 can reapply in 2001-2002 using **Renewal FAFSA on the Web**. To protect the student's information, the Web site requires that users provide their PIN and other identifying information to access their Renewal Application on the Web. Because the PIN also serves as an electronic signature for the application, independent students don't need to send in a signature page, and dependent students need to submit the parent signature only.

Many students will automatically receive a **paper Renewal FAFSA** in the mail. For 2001-2002, the CPS mailed Renewal FAFSAs to students who applied for federal student aid in 2000-2001 and who met certain conditions—for instance, their SSNs and addresses were valid, they were not in default, and so forth. These students should have received Renewal FAFSAs in the mail or from their schools some time after November 2000. Students who receive a paper Renewal FAFSA can also reapply by using their PIN and other identifying information to access their Renewal FAFSA on the Web. Students without PINs can request one by going to the PIN web site.

Instead of a paper Renewal FAFSA, some students will automatically receive a **PIN by mail**—students in the Renewal Application database who filed on the Web in 2000-2001 and those who reported in 2000-2001 that they were graduate or fifth year undergraduate students. PINs that are automatically sent in the mail

PIN Registration

The Personal Identification Number (PIN), along with other identifiers, give students Internet access to their information in SFA systems. Applicants can use the PIN to:

- ❖ electronically sign a FAFSA on the Web, FAFSA Express, or Renewal FAFSA on the Web application
- ❖ correct the FAFSA on-line using Corrections on the Web
- ❖ see the EFC and other Student Aid Report information as soon as the FAFSA is processed (through “Student Access on the Web”)
- ❖ review their personal financial aid history as maintained in the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS)
- ❖ access expanded Direct Loan information and tools

will be forwarded if a student’s forwarding address has been left with the post office. PINs requested by students will not be forwarded.

There’s also a **school distribution option**. In the fall before each application year, you can request Renewal FAFSAs for some or all of the students who listed your school on their applications for the previous year. The FAFSA processor will not print and mail Renewal FAFSAs to those students whose records you have requested.

You can either request the electronic Renewal FAFSA records or ask for paper applications. If you request paper copies of the Renewal FAFSAs, your school is then responsible for distributing these paper Renewal FAFSAs to the students. Note that the FAFSA processor won’t send your school paper Renewal FAFSAs for students who were automatically sent a PIN (graduate and fifth-year undergraduate students and web filers in 2000-2001). If you request only the electronic Renewal FAFSA records, your school *must* print the applications and then enter and transmit completed Renewal FAFSAs through EDE for those students. More information on this process is provided each year in an Action Letter published in the summer. (Your school must participate in the Electronic Data Exchange to request electronic Renewal FAFSA records.)

FAFSA Express

A student who has access to a computer and modem but is unable to use *FAFSA on the Web* can use *FAFSA Express* to apply electronically. *FAFSA Express* requires only an IBM-compatible computer with a Windows operating system and a modem. A student can download the program from the Web at www.fafsa.ed.gov

A student who files using *FAFSA Express* may save his or her data to a diskette but can’t save this personal data to a computer’s hard drive.

Who gets the PIN

Automatic recipients:

- Applicants in the Renewal Application database who filed on the Web in 2000-2001.
- Applicants in the Renewal Application database who reported in 2000-2001 that they were fifth year/other undergraduates, graduates, or professionals.
- Applicants in 2001-2002 who successfully passed the SSN match with the Social Security Administration (SSA), provided a complete mailing address, and signed their FAFSA.

 For the 2001-2002 award year, SFA plans to make PINs available to anyone who doesn’t get a PIN automatically—apply for one by going to the PIN webpage at www.pin.ed.gov

Student rights with respect to eligibility matches

The Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988 prohibits a school from suspending, terminating, or reducing SFA funds; making a final denial of SFA funds; or taking other adverse action against a student based on the results of an interagency data match unless the student has been notified and has had 30 days to respond to the notification. This law applies to all the data matches performed by the CPS.

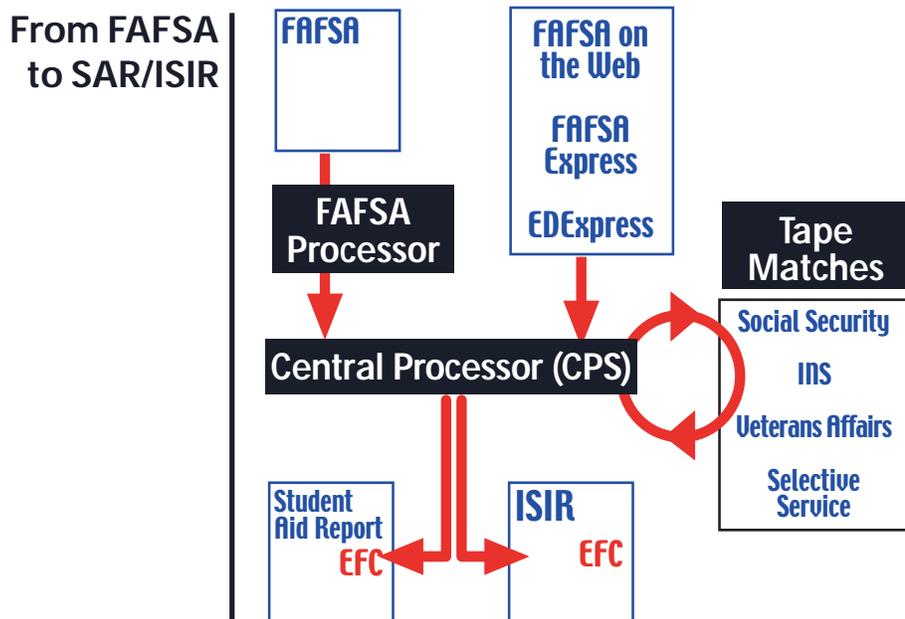
A student using *FAFSA Express* transmits the application data to the FAFSA processing system via modem.

For 2001-2002, FAFSA Express on diskette will be available only to students living on military bases outside the United States. Those students may order it by calling 1-800-801-0576. Because fewer and fewer applicants are using this product, this will be the last year that *FAFSA Express* is offered.

PROCESSING THE FAFSA

If the FAFSA was submitted on paper, it goes first to the FAFSA Processor for data entry, and then to the Central Processing System (CPS). If the FAFSA was submitted electronically, it goes directly to the CPS. The CPS uses the data to calculate the EFC and match the student's data against several databases at other agencies, such as the Social Security Administration's databases, the Immigration and Naturalization Service's database of noncitizens, the Selective Service System registration database, and the Department of Veterans Affairs' database.

The CPS also checks the application, using several editing criteria designed to detect possible inconsistencies and mistakes. For instance, if a dependent student reported the parents' marital status as married but reported the household size as only "2," the CPS edit checks would catch the inconsistency. If the data is inconsistent, the CPS may be able to calculate an EFC based on assumptions. For applications that your school submits through EDE, you can anticipate certain assumptions and correct or override certain information on the student's first FAFSA submission. Students who submit applications using *FAFSA on the Web* or *Renewal FAFSA on the Web* can also override some of the CPS edits.



OUTPUT DOCUMENTS: THE SAR AND ISIR

After processing is complete, the CPS produces output documents (or records) showing the information the student originally provided, the EFC, the results of the eligibility matches, and information about inconsistencies identified through the CPS edits. If the CPS was unable to calculate the EFC, the output record will not show an EFC.

There are two basic types of output documents: the *Institutional Student Information Record* (ISIR), which is sent electronically to your school, and the *Student Aid Report* (SAR), which is sent to the student. The SAR and ISIR contain the student's EFC, the student's application information, and other information for the financial aid office.

You will only receive an ISIR for the student if your school is listed on the student's FAFSA, or if the student provides you with his or her DRN. A student can list up to six schools at a time. If your school is not listed on the FAFSA, you can request an ISIR for a student through EDE if you have the student's Data Release Number (DRN). The DRN is included on the ISIR in the "FAA Information Section" if your school originally entered the student's application data through EDE.

Schools are required to be able to receive ISIRs and cannot require students to submit SARs to the school in order to receive aid. However, a school **can** require the student to use a SAR to make corrections. If you don't have an ISIR for a student who has provided a SAR, you'll have to process the SAR to be able to award the student SFA aid. You must also make sure that your school is added to the CPS record for the student (see Chapter 4 of this Guide).

The student will get a Student Aid Report from the CPS within four weeks of submitting the FAFSA. Some students will receive a regular SAR. However, students who filed the FAFSA electronically (through the Web or EDE) will receive a *SAR Information Acknowledgement* rather than a SAR. (Exception: the student will receive a rejected SAR if a student or parent signature is missing.) Unlike the SAR, corrections aren't made on the *SAR Information Acknowledgement*, but by the school through EDEExpress or by the student using Corrections on the Web. The *SAR Information Acknowledgement* also has fewer and less detailed comments for the student.

The SAR and the ISIR will indicate any questionable results from the eligibility matches described above. For instance, if a student has defaulted on a federal student loan, the SAR and ISIR will note this in several places (including comments to the student and the NSLDS Financial Aid History page). The student may still be eligible for federal aid, but you must resolve the questions before paying any aid to the student.

Action Letter Citations

Changes to the paper FAFSA, ISIR, SAR, application edits, and database matches:

Changes and enhancements are discussed in 2001-2002 Action Letter #4, November 2000 (GEN-00-22)

FAFSA Express, FAFSA and PIN Web sites:

Changes and enhancements are discussed in 2001-2002 Action Letter #7 February 2001 (GEN-01-04)

EDE Renewal FAFSA: 2001-2002

Action Letter #2, September 2000 (GEN-00-13)

These letters are posted at ifap.ed.gov Select "Current Publications by Title" and go to "Action Letters" for 2001-2002.

Reject Example

Sioned isn't married, but is living with her boyfriend. She reports on the FAFSA that she's single, but also reports her boyfriend's income as spouse's income. Her application is rejected; she receives a reject reason code of 11 and a comment explaining that she reported contradictory information. Sioned must submit a correction changing the spouse's income to zero.

Resources for aid administrators

For questions about CPS processing, EDESuite software (including EDEExpress), EDconnect software, SAIG enrollment, SFAdownload web site and SAIG data transmissions, call

CPS/WAN Technical Support

1-800-330-5947
CPSWAN@ncs.com

For bulk orders of FAFSAs, technical systems publications, and more, visit the "Bookstore" at the

SFA Schools Portal

<http://sfa4schools.sfa.ed.gov>

Deadline Date Notice

Every year the Department publishes a deadline notice that provides all the processing deadline dates. The deadline notice for the 2000-2001 award year was published on July 10, 2000. When the official deadline notice for the 2001-2002 award year is published, it will be available on the IFAP web site.

If there were certain types of problems in the student's application, the SAR and ISIR will show that the student's application has been rejected. Reject codes are provided in the "FAA Information" section, and no EFC is calculated. The student will have to provide more information or correct erroneous information to receive an EFC. The SAR will have instructions for the student on how to correct the problem. We'll be discussing some specific types of "rejects" in the relevant sections. A complete list of reject codes is provided in *A Guide to 2001-2002 ISIRs* (which can be found under "Action Letter #6" for 2001-2002 at <http://ifap.ed.gov>).

DEADLINES

The application processing cycle lasts 18 months. For the 2001-2002 award year, application processing began in January 2001, and applications for that year will be accepted until July 1, 2002.

The CPS processor must receive a student's electronic FAFSA transmission by July 1, 2002. **A paper FAFSA must be legible and mailed to the Federal Student Aid Programs address listed on the FAFSA in time for the processor to receive it by the deadline.** There are **no exceptions** to these deadlines. An electronic application record cannot be received before January 2, 2001, and if it is received after July 1, 2002 it will not be processed. An application signed before January 1, 2001 or after July 1, 2002 will be returned unprocessed with a letter of explanation.

These are the anticipated deadline dates for the 2001-2002 award year:

- Corrections on a paper SAR must be received by August 16, 2002.
- Corrections through EDE must be received and accepted by the CPS before 8:00 pm (eastern time) on August 27, 2002.
- Address and school changes through the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) can be made through August 27, 2002.
- To give a Pell to a student, a school must have a valid output document while the student is still enrolled for the award year, but no later than September 3, 2002.
- For Pell recipients selected for verification, the school must have verification documents and a valid output document no later than 90 days after the last day of enrollment or September 3, 2002, whichever is earlier.