



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

GEN-12-07

April 16, 2012

Subject: Acceptable Documentation for Verification

Summary: This letter updates the guidance provided to institutions concerning the documentation they must obtain to verify income and tax information.

Dear Colleague:

As of mid-April 2012, over two million students and parents have successfully used the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, making the 2012-2013 FAFSA verification process easier and quicker for them and reducing the administrative burden on thousands of institutions. In addition, hundreds of thousands more applicants have received and submitted to their schools IRS Tax Return Transcripts. As the April tax deadline approaches, we are aware that some students and families may not be able to immediately use the FAFSA-IRS Data Retrieval Tool or to obtain IRS Tax Return Transcripts needed to complete the verification process primarily because of the large volume of tax returns coming in at this time of year.

In the limited set of cases where an aid applicant, who has filed a tax return and attempted unsuccessfully to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool or to obtain IRS Tax Return transcripts, needs a timely alternative for meeting the 2012-2013 verification requirements, institutions may, until July 15, 2012, use a signed copy of the relevant (i.e., applicant, spouse, or parent) 2011 IRS Tax Return (Form 1040, 1040A, or 1040EZ, as appropriate) as acceptable verification documentation for the 2012-2013 award year.

After July 15, 2012, institutions must comply with the acceptable documentation requirements included in the July 13, 2011 *Federal Register* notice and in DCL GEN-11-13.

The Department will require some institutions to obtain verification documentation in compliance with the current acceptable documentation requirements for a sample of the institution's students whose information was verified using a paper copy of a tax return.

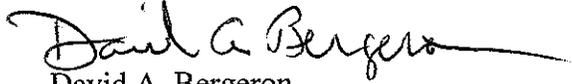
As noted, more than two million applicants and parents have successfully used the IRS Data Retrieval Tool to directly transfer IRS information into their FAFSA, vastly simplifying the process of applying for financial aid. Consequently, it remains important for institutions to communicate to all applicants that using the tool -- either when initially completing a FAFSA or by using the corrections functionality of FAFSA on the Web -- provides them with the fastest, easiest, and most secure solution for meeting verification requirements.

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We remain committed to our goal of enhancing the verification process and will continue to work with the financial aid community toward that goal.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "David A. Bergeron". The signature is written in black ink and includes a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

David A. Bergeron
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
Policy, Planning, and Innovation
Office of Postsecondary Education