

Question:

Must schools that participate in the Department's Quality Assurance (QA) Program adhere to the revised verification requirements for "acceptable documentation" as it relates to verification of income, taxes, and untaxed income?

Answer:

The Program Participation Agreements the Department has signed with the schools participating in the Department's Quality Assurance (QA) Program exempt the approximately 150 QA schools from sections [34 CFR 668.56](#) and [668.57](#) of the verification regulations. Thus, the schools in the QA program have discretion in deciding which FAFSA data elements they verify and what they accept as documentation for those items. Therefore, QA schools may choose to collect alternate documentation to verify information that, under the new rules would require the applicant (or the applicant's parent) to either use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool or to submit to the school an IRS tax transcript. **QA schools are permitted to use alternative documentation to verify income, taxes, and untaxed income using the applicant's (or applicant's parent) signed copies of the appropriate tax returns.**

QA schools are not exempt from resolving conflicting information, even after verification has been completed for an applicant. In instances where a school subsequently receives a copy of an IRS transcript that provides information that is different from information reported on the paper tax return, the tax transcript information should generally be presumed to be correct. If the school has a reason to believe the paper return should be favored over the tax transcript, it needs to confirm this by requesting a subsequent IRS Accounting transcript from the student.