

The Application Process: FAFSAsm to ISIR

The law governing the FSA 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. 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 federal student aid, a student must complete a FAFSA (unless he wants only a PLUS loan for his parents). The FAFSA collects financial and other information used to calculate the expected family contribution (EFC) and to confirm eligibility through computer matches with other agencies.

TYPES OF APPLICATIONS

Students can fill out a paper FAFSA or apply electronically through their school (Electronic Data Exchange) or on the Web (FAFSA on the Web). Students who have applied in previous years may be able to use a simplified form, the Renewal FAFSA. Renewal FAFSAs can be completed on paper or on the Web.

Paper FAFSA

Many students still use the paper FAFSA, which can be ordered from the Federal Student Aid Information Center at 1-800-4 FED AID (1-800-433-3243). 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 www.edpubs.org/bpos to access our on-line ordering system.

Electronic Data Exchange (EDE)

If you submit the student’s application information through 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

Your students can use FAFSA on the Web at <http://fafsa.ed.gov> to complete an application online and submit it directly to the Central Processing System (CPS). Students can also correct any of their previously submitted data except for SSN and date of birth. For help with FAFSA on the Web, a student can call 1-800-4-FED-AID.

Processing the Application

FAFSA Processor

→ paper FAFSAs, SARs, and signature pages only

Central Processing System

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

Exception to FAFSA filing requirement

If a dependent student only wants to receive a parental PLUS loan, she doesn’t have to complete a FAFSA (though many schools still require it), but one of her parents will need to complete a loan application and promissory note.



Free CPS/WAN technical support

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

Advantages of electronic filing

We strongly recommend the electronic applications over the paper FAFSA because of the following benefits that all the electronic applications share:

- 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 conflicts are 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

Who gets the PIN

Automatic recipients:

- Applicants in the renewal application database who filed on the Web or made corrections on the Web in 2001-2002
- Applicants in the renewal application database who reported in 2001-2002 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
- Applicants whose school requested that they get PINs instead of paper renewal FAFSAs

 Anyone who doesn’t get a PIN automatically can apply for one by going to the PIN webpage at www.pin.ed.gov.

Web sites for students

FAFSA on the Web
Corrections on the Web
Renewal FAFSA on the Web
Check status of application
Online SAR
<http://fafsa.ed.gov>

PIN website
<http://pin.ed.gov>

The PIN

The Personal Identification Number, along with other identifiers, gives students Internet access to their information in FSA 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
- ◆ sign electronic promissory notes

Renewal FAFSA

Returning students should use a Renewal FAFSA instead of filling out another FAFSA--most of the data from the application the student filed the year before will already be filled in. The student can review each item, correct any that have changed, and provide new information for a small number of items. The Renewal FAFSA can be submitted by students on the Web or on paper.

Some students will automatically receive a **paper Renewal FAFSA** in the mail. For 2002-2003, the CPS mailed Renewal FAFSAs to students who applied for federal student aid in 2001-2002 and who met certain conditions—for instance, their SSNs and addresses were valid and they were not in default on a federal student loan. These students should have received Renewal FAFSAs in the mail some time after November 15, 2001. 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 be sent a PIN by mail (see the margin note). PINs that are automatically sent in the mail will be forwarded if a student’s forwarding address has been left with the post office. PINs requested by students will not be forwarded.

As noted in the introduction, the option for schools to request either paper or electronic Renewal FAFSAs for their students has been eliminated for 2002-2003.

FAFSA Express is also no longer available, except in a modified form for the TRIO Programs.

PROCESSING THE FAFSA

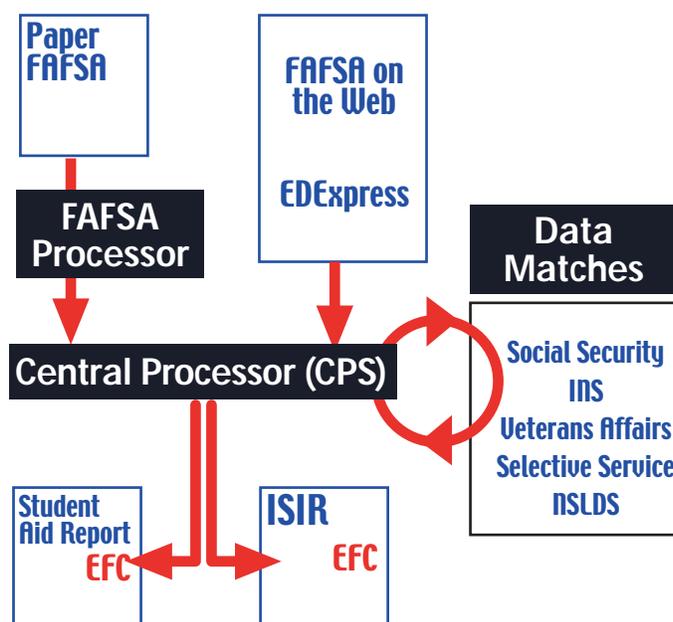
If the FAFSA was submitted on paper, it goes first to the FAFSA Processor for data entry and then to the Central Processing System (CPS). If the FAFSA was signed and submitted on the Web, it goes directly to the CPS. If an electronic signature was missing, the FAFSA goes to a signature hold file for 14 days pending receipt of a signature page or electronic signature. If some type of signature hasn't been received in that time, the application will be sent to the CPS for processing without signatures; see the next section on output documents.

The CPS uses the application 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 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 edit checks would catch the inconsistency. Even when 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 correct or override some of the CPS edits.

Student rights with respect to eligibility matches

The Computer Matching and Privacy Protection Act of 1988 prohibits a school from suspending, terminating, or reducing FSA funds; making a final denial of FSA 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 data matches performed by the CPS.



From FAFSA to SAR/ISIR

Action Letter Citations

Renewal FAFSA: 2002-2003 Action Letter #1, August 2001 (GEN-01-10).

This letter is posted at ifap.ed.gov. Select "Current Publications by Title" and go to "Action Letters" for 2002-2003.

OUTPUT DOCUMENTS: THE SAR AND ISIR

After processing is complete, the CPS produces output documents or records that show 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 one.

There are two basic types of output documents: the *Institutional Student Information Record* (ISIR), which is sent electronically to the school, and the *Student Aid Report* (SAR), which is sent to the student.

You will only receive an ISIR for the student if your school is listed on her FAFSA, which has space for six schools. 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 appears on the top right corner of the SAR and is also included on the ISIR in the "FAA Information Section" if your school originally entered the student's application data through EDE. The DRN and PIN are different: the former is the number that authorizes you access to the student's application information; the latter is the student's personal code and should be given to no one.

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 must use the SAR to award the student financial aid. You must also make sure that your school is added to the CPS record for the student (see chapter 4 of this guide).

Depending on how the student applied, the SAR will come in one of three ways. Students who apply with a paper FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA will receive a paper SAR. Students who apply electronically (by using EDE or FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA on the Web) and supply an e-mail address will receive an e-mail with a link to an online SAR that they can access by providing their SSN, date of birth, and first two letters of their last name. Students who apply electronically but don't provide an e-mail address will receive a SAR Information Acknowledgement, which has fewer and less detailed comments than the SAR and which can't be used for corrections as the SAR can. Students will receive a rejected paper SAR if a student or parent signature is missing.

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 on the Financial Aid History page in the National Student Loan Data System or NSLDS. The student may still be eligible for federal aid, but you must resolve the situation before paying him.

For certain types of problems, the SAR and ISIR will show that the student's application has been rejected and no EFC has been

Reject Example

Sioned 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 to blank out the spouse's income.

calculated. The SAR will tell the student how to solve the problem by providing more information or correcting errors. Reject codes are given in the FAA Information section, and a complete list of reject codes is provided in the guide for the 2002-2003 ISIRs that can be found at <http://ifap.ed.gov>.

DEADLINES

The application processing cycle lasts 18 months. For the 2002-2003 award year, application processing began January 2, 2002, and applications will be accepted until June 30, 2003.

The CPS processor must receive a student's electronic FAFSA transmission by June 30, 2003. **A paper FAFSA must be legible, and it must be 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 1, 2002, and if it is received after June 30, 2003 it will not be processed. A paper application signed or received before January 1, 2002 or after June 30, 2003 will be returned unprocessed with a letter of explanation.

In addition to the above dates, the following are anticipated deadlines for the 2002-2003 award year:

- Corrections on a paper SAR must be received by August 15, 2003.
- Corrections through EDE must be received and accepted by the CPS before 8:00 pm (eastern time) on August 27, 2003.
- Address and school changes through the Federal Student Aid Information Center (FSAIC) can be made through August 27, 2003.
- 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 2, 2003.
- 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 2, 2003, whichever is earlier.

For the last two bulleted items, the date the institution receives the ISIR is considered to be the date the CPS processed the ISIR transaction. This process date is listed on the first page of the SAR and ISIR.

Resources for aid administrators

For questions about EDconnect, EDEExpress, and Renewal FAFSAs, call CPS/WAN customer service: 1-800-330-5947

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

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

Deadline Date Notice

Every year the Department publishes in the Federal Register a deadline notice that provides all the processing deadline dates. The deadline notice for the 2001-2002 award year was published on August 20, 2001. When the official deadline notice for the 2002-2003 award year is published, it will be available on the IFAP web site.

