



FAFSA PROCESS

QUICK GUIDE

The Quick Guide provides an overview of each FAFSA section for a Student and a Contributor, defines financial aid terms, and FAFSA-required documents.

STUDENT



Student Background

Student is determined to be either dependent or independent for financial aid purposes



Student Demographics

Student inputs information including sex, race, ethnicity, citizenship status, high school information, and high school completion status



Student Financials

Student financial information is imported into the FAFSA from the IRS via the Direct Data Exchange (DDX)



Colleges & Career Schools

Student selects up to 20 postsecondary institutions to receive their processed FAFSA information



Contributor Invite

Student is asked to enter their Contributor's email address to invite them to the FAFSA



Student Review & Sign

Student reviews, signs, and submits their section of the FAFSA

CONTRIBUTOR



Contributor Demographics

Contributor reports marital status and state of legal residence



Contributor Financials

Contributor financial information is imported from the IRS via DDX. Contributor reports federal benefits received, family, size, and a number of children in college



Contributor Review & Sign

Contributor reviews, signs, and submits the entire FAFSA form

FAFSA COMPLETE





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FINANCIAL AID TERMS

FAFSA- Free Application for Federal Student Aid

FAFSA is a one-stop application to gain access to federal, state, institutional, and other funding for education and career training expenses.

Contributor

Anyone required to provide information, consent and approval, and a signature on the FAFSA form.

StudentAid.gov Account (FSA ID)

Each Student and Contributor must have a separate StudentAid.gov Account (FSA ID) with the Federal Student Aid (FSA) to access, sign, and submit the FAFSA.

Dependency Status

Identifies if a Student needs a Contributor to submit information on their FAFSA. Dependent Students require Parent Contributor(s). Independent Students require a Spouse Contributor only if married.

Student Aid Index (SAI)

Eligibility index number used by Financial Aid Offices to determine how much aid a Student would receive if they attended a school. The SAI is not a dollar amount and can be negative, which reflects a higher financial need.

Prior-Prior Year (PPY)

Tax information from two years prior to the academic year a Student plans to attend college or career training school.

FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS)

Report that includes the information reported on the 2027-28 FAFSA. FSS includes Student Aid Index (SAI) and estimates for a Pell Grant and federal loans, and if a Student has been selected for verification.

FAFSA DOCUMENTS

Completing the FAFSA has never been easier! Most of the required tax information for Students and Contributors is imported automatically into the FAFSA from the IRS through the Direct Data Exchange (DDX). This process happens behind the scenes. However, there may be a time when individuals need to manually input financial information. If so, here are documents and information to have readily available:

- Social Security Number (SSN)
- Alien Registration Number (if any)
- Statements for checking and savings accounts, cash, investments, etc.
- Prior-Prior Year's Tax Information:
 - IRS 1040's plus all the Schedules; W-2's
 - Federal Benefits Received, such as Medicaid, Federal Housing Assistance, SNAP, TANF, WIC, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Free or Reduced Price School Lunch, etc.