



FAFSA Verification Guide

Verification Policy and Procedures

To apply for federal financial aid, a student submits a Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)) to the Central Processing System (CPS). Because students sometimes make errors on their application, there is a process for verifying applications and making corrections. The HEA Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 668.51-61) governs the verification by institutions of information submitted by applicants for student financial assistance under the subsidized student financial assistance programs.

In accordance with these regulations, Messenger College has established and uses written policies and procedures for verifying an applicant's FAFSA information. These policies and procedures include—

- (1) The time period within which an applicant must provide any documentation requested by the College;
- (2) The consequences of an applicant's failure to provide the requested documentation within the specified time period;
- (3) The method by which the College notifies an applicant of the results of its verification if, as a result of verification, the applicant's EFC changes and results in a change in the amount of the applicant's assistance under the title IV, HEA programs;
- (4) The procedures the College will follow itself or the procedures the College will require an applicant to follow to correct FAFSA information determined to be in error; and
- (5) The procedures the College will follow for making referrals to the Office of Inspector General.

Institutional Responsibility

The College must require an applicant whose FAFSA information is selected for verification to submit supporting documentation to verify specified data elements of his/her FAFSA, unless the applicant qualifies for a federal exclusion. (See Exclusions from Verification.)

Applicant Responsibility

If the College requests documents or information from an applicant under this, the applicant must provide the specified documents or information.

Selection of Applicants

Standard Selection

As stated previously, to apply for federal financial aid a student submits a FAFSA to the Central Processing System (CPS). The CPS selects which applications are selected for verification. Data-based statistical analysis is used to select for verification those applicants with the highest probability of error on their FAFSA submissions. The CPS sets a Verification Flag on the student's processed FAFSA report to indicate that the student's record has been selected for verification. The processed FAFSA is also known as the Student Aid Report (SAR). CPS will also use a Verification Tracking Flag to place an applicant selected for verification into one of six Verification Tracking Groups.



FAFSA Verification Guide

Institutional Selection

MC Financial Aid has the authority and responsibility to select an application for verification if there is reason to believe that an applicant's FAFSA information is inaccurate and/or contains conflicting information.

Update or Correction Selection

An aid applicant should be aware that if an update or correction is submitted by the institution to CPS, this may trigger CPS to select the application for additional data elements for verification. In this case, MC will require the applicant to submit any additional documentation needed to complete the verification process.

Notification

A student whose FAFSA information is selected for verification will be notified of his/her selected status as follows:

- a) CPS will notify the student on his/her Student Aid Report (SAR). Next to the EFC will be an asterisk referring to a comment in the student section of the SAR that tells the applicant that he/she will be asked by the College to provide documentation for verification.
- b) MC will send email notifications to the students to either their home address or their Populi email. Monthly notifications will be sent until either the student has submitted all documents required for verification or the deadline for submission has been reached.

College email notifications sent to a student whose FAFSA information is selected for verification will include:

- a) A link to student's web portal— <https://ufassnapprod.regenteducation.net/Welcome.aspx>. There, under the "To Do List," the items will be listed that must be finished prior to processing your Financial Aid Application.
- b) The student's responsibilities with respect to the verification of FAFSA information, including the deadlines for completing any actions required and the consequences of failing to complete any required action.



FAFSA Verification Guide

Information to be verified

For each award year, the Secretary of Education publishes in the Federal Register a notice announcing the FAFSA information that an institution and an applicant may be required to verify. The notice also specifies what documentation is acceptable for verifying FAFSA information. The Federal Register currently lists the items to verify based upon the Verification Tracking Group to which the applicant is assigned. That information is detailed in the chart below:

Verification Tracking Flag	Verification Tracking Group Name	FAFSA Information Required to be Verified
V1	Standard Verification Group (Tax Filers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adjusted Gross Income • U.S. Income Tax Paid • Untaxed Portions of IRA Distributions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Untaxed Portion of Pensions • IRA Deductions & Payments • Tax Exempt Interest Income <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education Credits • Number of Household Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number in College
V1	Standard Verification Group (Non-Tax Filers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Income Earned from Work • Number of Household Members <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number in College • Verification of Non-filer Status
V2	Not currently in use	
V3	Not currently in use	
V4	Custom Verification Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High School Completion Status • Identity/Statement of Education Purpose
V5	Aggregate Verification Group	All items in V1 and V4
V6	Not currently in use	

NOTE: Federal regulations stipulate that an institution may require an applicant to verify any FAFSA information that it specifies. On occasion, the MC Financial Aid office may require a student to verify any FAFSA information and to provide any reasonable documentation.

Acceptable Documentation

The documentation required for verification varies according to the specific FAFSA information being verified. A student selected for verification will need to submit the following acceptable documentation to the College to complete the verification process. If a student is unable to submit any of the required documents, he/she should contact the Financial Aid Office to discuss possible alternative acceptable documentation.



FAFSA Verification Guide

FAFSA Information	Acceptable Documentation
Household Size*	Independent/Dependent Verification Worksheet
Number in College	Independent/Dependent Verification Worksheet
AGI & U.S. Tax Paid	IRS DRT** or IRS Tax Return Transcript***
Untaxed Income (Tax Return Data)	IRS DRT** or IRS Tax Return Transcript***
Non-Filer Work Income	Independent/Dependent Verification Worksheet & IRS W-2 for the appropriate tax year
High School Completion	High School Diploma or Transcript; GED Certificate or transcript; homeschooled credential or transcript; or academic transcript showing two- year program completion
Identity/Statement of Education Purpose	Original government-issued photo identification (ID) such as a passport or a driver's license and Identity and Statement of Educational Purpose for the current academic year
Other Information	Other documentation as specified by the CPS/MC

*Household Size: Please read the Verification Worksheet closely to determine who is to be included in your household. Definitions are specified on each type of verification worksheet assigned to the individual student in any given academic year.

**IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT): The IRS DRT is the fastest, easiest and most secure method of meeting verification requirements. To verify tax data, the U.S. Department of Education and the College encourage students and parents to use the IRS DRT to import data from their tax return directly to the FAFSA, either at the initial FAFSA filing or through the FAFSA correction process. For the retrieved data to be acceptable documentation of tax data, it is necessary that neither the student nor the parents change the data after it is transferred from the IRS.

***IRS Tax Return Transcript: If a student or parent cannot or will not use the IRS DRT, they must provide a transcript obtained from the IRS that lists the tax account information of the tax filer for requested tax year.

Requesting a Tax Return Transcript

A student or parent may request an IRS Tax Return Transcript from the IRS, free of charge, in one of the following ways:

- Online by downloading an immediate PDF at www.irs.gov
- By mail after submitting an online request at www.irs.gov

Victims of Identity Theft

When the IRS determines a tax filer has been or likely was a victim of identity theft, it will not allow him/her to use the IRS DRT process or get a tax return transcript until the matter has been resolved, which can take up to



FAFSA Verification Guide

a year for complex cases. For a tax filer who is a victim of identity theft, the College will accept for verification a Tax Return Data Based View (TRDBV) transcript along with a signed and dated statement from the tax filers that they are victims of IRS tax-related identity theft and that the IRS has been made aware of this. The tax filer should also provide the College with a copy of IRS Form 14039, Identity Theft Affidavit, if he/she submitted that form to the IRS.

Filing an Amended Return

A student or parent who files an amended return cannot use the IRS DRT process. Instead he/she may submit to the Financial Aid Office an IRS Tax Return Transcript that lists tax account information of the tax filer and a signed copy of the amended tax return (1040X) that was filed with the IRS for the requested tax year.

Tax Filing Extensions

A student or parent who has been granted a tax filing extension must provide a copy of IRS Form 4868, Application for Automatic Extension of Time to File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return. The tax filer must also provide copies of all IRS W-2 Forms for the requested tax year and a signed draft copy of the corresponding year's federal tax return to the Financial Aid Office. MC may also require submission of a copy of the completed (and signed) tax return before aid is disbursed to the student's account.

Foreign Tax Filers

A student or parent who filed an income tax return other than an IRS form, such as a foreign or Puerto Rican tax form, must use the income and tax information (converted to U.S. dollars) from the lines of that form that correspond most closely to the income information reported on a U.S. income tax return to complete the FAFSA. Foreign tax filers cannot use the IRS DRT process and, therefore, must submit to the Financial Aid Office signed copies of their requested year(s) foreign tax returns translated into English with U.S. dollar equivalencies.

Non-filers

A student or parent who is not required to file a U.S. tax return is required to submit the College Verification Worksheet for the requested academic year and copies of all IRS W-2 Forms for the requested tax year to verify income earned from work. If an individual who is required to submit an IRS W-2 Form is unable to obtain one in a timely manner, the College may permit that individual to provide a signed statement that includes:

- a) the amount of income earned from work;
- b) the source of that income; and
- c) the reason that the IRS Form W-2 is not available in a timely manner.

The College must require the applicant and/or parent to submit a "Verification of Non-Filing" from the IRS that the tax filer did not file an IRS income tax return for the requested tax year. The request for "Verification of Non-Filing" can be obtained by the tax filer requesting an IRS Tax Return Transcript as outlined above.



FAFSA Verification Guide

Deadlines and Failure to Submit Documentation

A student whose FAFSA information has been selected for verification must submit all documentation required for verification to the Financial Aid Office by specific deadlines according to the type of subsidized federal aid received and his/her period of enrollment. In general, students will not be awarded any type of federal and state subsidized aid until the verification process is complete.

For subsidized federal aid programs, excluding the Federal Pell Grant Program:

A student enrolled in the fall term of any given academic year should submit required verification documentation as soon as requested but no later than September 1 of that year. A student who begins enrollment in the spring term should submit required verification documentation no later than February 1 of that same year.

If the student does not provide the verification documentation by the deadline, the College may cancel his/her subsidized federal aid (excluding the Federal Pell Grant Program) for the award year.

If the student then provides the documentation after the deadline, the College will reevaluate the student's eligibility for subsidized aid and will award aid based on the availability of federal funds at the time of documentation submission.

For the Federal Pell Grant Program:

A Pell applicant selected for verification must complete the verification process by the deadline published in the Federal Register. In most cases, the deadline would be late September or 120 days after the last day of the student's enrollment, whichever is earlier. The verification process is complete when the College has received all requested documentation and a valid processed FAFSA report is on file including any necessary corrections to the report.

If the student does not provide the verification documentation or the College does not receive the valid processed FAFSA report by the deadline, the student forfeits his/her Pell grant for the award year.

Updating FAFSA Information

Generally, a student cannot update FAFSA information that was correct as of the date the application was signed because the FAFSA is considered to be a "snapshot" of the family's financial situation as of that date. For example, if a student's family sold some stock after signing the FAFSA and spent the proceeds on an automobile or home improvement, the student cannot update the FAFSA to reflect a change in assets.

After the FAFSA is signed, only certain items can be updated under the conditions listed below.

(1) Dependency Status Change: If a student's dependency status changes at any time during the award year, the student must update FAFSA information; except when the update is caused by a change in the student's marital status.



FAFSA Verification Guide

(2) Verification of Household Size or Number in College: An applicant whose FAFSA information is selected for verification of household size or number in college must update those items to be correct as of the date of verification.

(3) Marital Status Change: When completing the FAFSA your marital status is considered “as of today”, meaning the day the application is signed. It can be updated in limited circumstances. At the college’s discretion you may update either (1) or (2) even when the update is due to a change in the student’s marital status if the college deems it necessary to address an inequity or to reflect more accurately the applicant’s ability to pay.

Correcting Errors on FAFSA Information

Although a student cannot update FAFSA information that was filed correctly, except under limited conditions as listed-above, errors made on the original FAFSA must be corrected.

As stated previously, to apply for federal aid a student submits a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to the Central Processing System (CPS). Generally, the FAFSA is submitted through the online process and the student receives from the CPS an electronic summary of his/her processed FAFSA known as the Student Aid Report (SAR).

Upon receipt of the SAR, the student should review all information listed on the SAR and submit for processing any errors reported on the original FAFSA to the CPS. In addition, customized College Verification Worksheets will be emailed to the primary email address of students selected for federal verification. The student and parent(s) should complete the documentation upon receipt and upload the completed documents in the Financial Aid Portal here:

<https://ufasnapprod.regenteducation.net/Welcome.aspx>. It is important that all verification documents be received by the College at least two weeks prior to the start of the semester or move in day, whichever is earlier, to avoid incurring late fees on the student’s account. It is the student’s responsibility to complete and return requested documents in a timely manner so financial aid to the student is not delayed.

An electronic summary of a student’s original FAFSA and any corrected FAFSA information will be sent from the CPS to the College. Once received, all FAFSA data, College Verification Worksheets, and any supplemental verification documents will then be reviewed by the College to verify the accuracy of the student’s FAFSA information and to calculate his/her eligibility for need-based financial aid.

If a student’s FAFSA information changes as a result of the College’s verification process, the College will:

- a) Submit for processing changes to the FAFSA information determined to be in error;
- b) Recalculate the student’s Federal Pell Grant on the basis of the recalculated EFC;
- c) Adjust the student’s financial aid package on the basis of the recalculated EFC.



FAFSA Verification Guide

Note: Although MC will be able to submit most changes to FAFSA information, on occasion it may be necessary for the student to submit changes directly to CPS. In such cases, the College will notify the student in writing (by email or phone) as to which data items must be corrected by the student and submitted for processing to the CPS.

Referral of Fraud Cases

Students and parents are advised that the College must and will refer to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) any credible information indicating that an applicant for Federal Student Aid may have engaged in fraud or other criminal misconduct in connection with FAFSA applications. Common misconduct includes; false claims of independent status, false claims of citizenship, use of false identities, forgery of signatures of certifications, and false statements of income. Note that fraud is the intent to deceive as opposed to a mistake on an application.

Resources

The Financial Aid Director and staff of Messenger College will work closely with students and parents whose FAFSA has been selected for verification. The Director, along with MC's third party servicer for financial aid (FA Solutions) will monitor the student's progress to help ensure that aid is awarded in a timely manner and will assist in answering any questions the students or parents may have about the process or about specific documents requested.

Students or parents may also refer to the Federal Student Aid website for the US Department of Education (<https://studentaid.gov/apply-for-aid/fafsa/review-and-correct>) for more information. However, for specific detail on the types of documents and the appropriate academic and/or tax years applicable to each student's situation, please contact the Director of Financial Aid for Messenger College.