



COLORADO
Department of
Higher Education

Federal Student Aid

An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

FAFSA® Frequently Asked Questions





These Frequently Asked Questions provide information and guidance on the implementation of FAFSA simplification for institutional representatives, advocacy organizations, school counselors, and outreach partners.

Q. What is FAFSA® simplification?

FAFSA simplification changes include the first major redesign of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) process in over 40 years, along with updates to the backend systems that process and store federal student aid application data. The goal is to make applying for federal student aid easier for students. FAFSA simplification implements provisions of the amended Fostering Undergraduate Talent by Unlocking Resources for Education (FUTURE) Act and the FAFSA Simplification Act.

Q. What is the Better FAFSA® Better Future campaign?

The Better FAFSA Better Future campaign will communicate FAFSA simplification changes and provide information and resources to aid in the adaptation of these changes.

Q. What are the benefits of FAFSA® simplification??

The benefits of FAFSA simplification include

- A more streamlined application process,
- Expanded eligibility for federal student aid,
- Reduced barriers for certain student populations (e.g., homeless and unaccompanied youth, incarcerated students, English language learners, and students from low-income backgrounds), and
- A better user experience for the FAFSA form.



Q. What major changes will FAFSA® simplification introduce?

Significant changes to the application process include changes to the FAFSA form, how students and families complete the application, and the eligibility calculation.

- The FAFSA form will be updated and streamlined to improve access.
 - The FAFSA form will be expanded to the 11 most common languages spoken by English learner students and their parents. Language-specific resources and support will also be available from FSA Information Center.
 - The form will be consumer-tested with prospective first-generation students and families, as well as students and families from low-income backgrounds.
 - The form will include new demographic questions about an applicant's gender and race/ethnicity.
 - Foster, homeless, and unaccompanied youth—as well as applicants who cannot provide parental information—will be able to complete the form with a provisional independent student determination and receive a calculated Student Aid Index (SAI). Students who have their independent student status approved by a financial aid administrator will also be eligible for a renewal of their dependency status in subsequent years if their circumstances remain unchanged.
- Rather than importing their tax information using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, applicants will consent to providing their Federal Tax Information (FTI) via a direct data share with the IRS. This enhanced data sharing simplifies the applicant's experience.
- Eligibility for federal student aid will be expanded in the following ways:
 - Selective Service and drug conviction questions will be eliminated to reduce applicant barriers.
 - New methodology will be introduced to calculate and determine applicant eligibility. The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) will be replaced with the Student Aid Index (SAI).
 - The new need-analysis formula allows for a negative SAI calculation and implements separate eligibility criteria for Federal Pell Grants.
 - Federal Pell Grant access will be expanded and linked to family size and federal poverty levels, which will allow more students and families from low-income backgrounds to qualify.
 - Federal Pell Grant access will be restored to incarcerated students under specific rules and programs.



- A contributor—a new term being introduced on the 2024-25 FAFSA—refers to anyone who is required to provide information on a student’s form (such as a parent/stepparent or spouse). A student’s or parent’s answers on the FAFSA will determine which contributors (if any) will be required to provide information.

Q. How will schools be impacted?

New requirements and calculations will modify the roles and responsibilities for schools.

Notable changes include

- Calculation of the Student Aid Index (SAI),
- New cost of attendance (COA) definitions,
- Updates to consumer information that must be publicly available to applicants and families,
- Simplified verification selection criteria, and
- Provisions for Financial Aid Administrators to exercise professional judgment in addressing an applicant’s special circumstances that may impact their eligibility for federal student aid. Other students will continue to qualify as independent on their FAFSA form and not required to provide parental information if they

Q. When will FAFSA® simplification be implemented?

FAFSA simplification will be implemented in phases. Certain changes began in the 2021–2022 Award Year and full implementation of major provisions will occur during the 2024–2025 Award Year.

Q. Where can schools find information to support FAFSA® simplification implementation?

The U.S. Department of Education’s office of Federal Student Aid will continue to provide schools with updated information about FAFSA simplification and implementation guidance on the FSA Knowledge Center.



Q. Where can I read through the full legislative texts?

- FUTURE Act www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/2486?q=%7B%22search%22%3A%5B%22future+act%22%5D%7D&s=1&r=10
- FAFSA Simplification Act (Division FF, Title VII of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021) www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2667/text

Q. What new terminology does the 2024-2025 FAFSA introduce?

- A contributor refers to anyone who is required to provide information on a student's form (such as a parent/stepparent or spouse). A student's or parent's answers on the FAFSA will determine which contributors (if any) will be required to provide information.
- The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is replaced with the Student Aid Index (SAI).
- The Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) is replaced by Federal Tax Information (FTI) and a new consent process.
- Safe key is replaced by authentication back up code.
- The Student Aid Report (SAR) is replaced FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS).



Additional Resources:



1 FSA Partner Emails - Subscribe to receive ongoing email updates from Federal Student Aid: outreach.fsapartners.ed.gov



2 Financial Aid Toolkit - Find outreach tools to help guide others through the FAFSA simplification changes: financialaidtoolkit.ed.gov/bfbf



3 FSA Training Center - Gain access to on-demand training courses, tools, and videos for financial aid professionals: fsatraining.ed.gov



4 Knowledge Center - Obtain official policy guidance and access to other FSA administrative websites for financial aid professionals: fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center



5 Customer Service Center - Connect with FSA service centers to assist students, parents, and borrowers: fsapartners.ed.gov/help-center/fsa-customer-service-center