Federal **Student** Aid
An OFFICE *of the* U.S. DEPARTMENT *of* EDUCATION

Summary of Enhancements to the 2026-27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form

Planned changes resulting from public comments

Changes in this section apply to both the online FAFSA experience and the FAFSA PDF.

Race/Ethnicity question: The order of the answer options has been updated to align with the order prescribed in the Office of Management and Budget's 2024 Statistical Policy Directive No. 15: Federal Race and Ethnicity Data Standards.

High School Completion: Guidance will be added to the help text instructing users to only select "none of the above" (or "none of the previous", as applicable) if they won't have any of the previous options when they begin the 2026-27 school year.

College Grants, Scholarships, or AmeriCorps Benefits Report to IRS as Income: The helper text has been updated to reflect that the question is typically answered with a zero because most scholarships and grants, including Federal Pell Grants, are not considered taxable income. Additionally, the help text for this question has been updated to reflect that any amount reported in this question is typically not the same amount as the amount reported on Form 1098-T (Box 5) or their adjusted gross income as reported to the IRS.

Federal Benefits Received: Language has been added to the help text explaining that users may more commonly know the refundable credit for coverage under a qualified health plan as a "health insurance subsidy under a federal or state marketplace."

Asset questions: The question label for businesses and investment farms has been updated to reference businesses and farms. Additionally, the help text has been updated to reference "income-producing farms" rather than "for-profit agricultural operations."

Signature sections: The duplicate occurrence of the word "fine" has been removed in the phrase " . . . subject to a fine of not more than $5,000 fine (§5 U.S.C. 552(a)(i)(3))." Note that this change also applies to the FAFSA Submission Summary.

Changes in this section apply only to the online FAFSA experience.
Based on feedback from the financial aid community, where and how required contributors are invited to a FAFSA form will undergo a significant overhaul.
- **Where:** Student and parent roles will be asked to invite required contributors after they complete their own section (but prior to signing).* By moving where the invite occurs,

we anticipate fewer abandoned FAFSA forms and more successful submissions.

* If a parent starts the form on behalf of a dependent student, that invitation process remains the same as in the 2025-26 FAFSA cycle. The parent will still need to provide the student's personally identifiable information in order to invite the student.

- **How:** To facilitate a simplified and improved user experience, we have also updated how a contributor gets invited. Dependent students will now identify and invite only one parent contributor. Once that initial parent accepts the invitation and enters the form, the system will determine if a second parent contributor is required based on data provided by the parent.

  Additionally, instead of providing contributor personally identifiable information (PII) and contact information, users will only need to provide an email address to invite a required contributor.

  The system will then generate an invitation code to be used to invite a required contributor. To accept an invitation, the contributor will then log in to StudentAid.gov and provide the invitation code to be linked to the student's FAFSA form.

Parent Spouse or Partner Date of Birth: For dependent students whose parents are married and filed a joint IRS tax form, students are required to invite only one parent. New for this year, the only information required to be provided for the other parent is their date of birth, because that information is needed to perform the Student Aid Index calculation.

Student Personal Circumstances section, Student Unusual Circumstances question: To align with the FAFSA PDF, a comma has been inserted between "incarcerated" and "and" on the second to the last bullet the examples provided.

Family size question helper text: Examples of when a family size may have changed will be added.

Confirmation page: In the "What Happens Next" section, text will be added indicating that it may take time for the student to receive a financial aid offer from their college or career school.

Changes in this section apply only to the FAFSA PDF or paper FAFSA Submission Summary.

FAFSA PDF changes:

Formatting: For ease of reading, some formatting changes have been made, including increasing the font size of the Notes section.

Page 1
- Apply by the Deadlines section: we replaced "your college" with "the college or career school you are attending or plan to attend."
- Fill Out the FAFSA Form section: we updated the URL for requesting an interpreter.
- Mail Your FAFSA Form section: we inserted a comma after the word "Then" and before "mail the original of pages 7 through 20 to:"

Page 3
- Why all the questions? section: we replaced "or" with "and/or."

Page 6
- Consent and Approval section: for ease of understanding, we added an introductory sentence explaining that the student and all contributors must provide consent and approval in order for the student's eligibility for federal student aid to be calculated.

Page 7
- Student section: we updated the instructions to clarify which questions apply to the student and that all questions are required except as indicated on page 4 in the 'Can I skip any questions?' section.
- Question 2: we added a tip to the right of the Permanent mailing address field that provides additional guidance for this field for incarcerated applicants.

Page 8
- Question 8: To align with changes previously made to the online form, we removed "Apply for a" in the question header.

Page 10
- Question 17: we updated one of the conditional questions for state-recognized high school equivalent to provide additional clarity.

Pages 12, 14, 17, and 19
- Signature field: we added helper text instructing users that handwritten original signatures using their full name is required.

Notes section:
- We made minor updates for ease of understanding and grammatical correctness.
- Identity Information: we added instructions telling users that if they previously created a StudentAid.gov account or completed a FAFSA form to use the name they previously

used. But if they have updated their name with the Social Security Administration since then, they should use their updated name.

- Personal Circumstances, Veteran section: we updated the description of veteran to provide clarity.

Paper FAFSA Submission Summary only changes:

We removed the instructional text: "Leave blank any questions that don't apply to the student."