

Federal Student Aid

An OFFICE of the U.S. DEPARTMENT of EDUCATION

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DCL ID: GEN-24-10

SUBJECT: 2025–2026 Award Year: FAFSA Information to be Verified and Acceptable Documentation (Updated July 22, 2025)


SUMMARY: This letter provides information that supplements the 2025–2026 award year verification information provided in the Federal Register notice published on September 4, 2024.

Note

July 23 Update: The Department has updated the acceptable documentation for identity verification. Starting in the 2025–26 award year, institutions are no longer required to obtain a Statement of Educational Purpose from students who are selected for V4 or V5 verification. This change is reflected in the attached suggested text. Additionally, two new methods are available for institutions to use when verifying identity, namely (1) a video call between the student and institutional personnel as a substitute for the notary statement when the student cannot appear in person at the school, and (2) documentation that the student had his or her identity verified by a third party using a method satisfying the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Identity Assurance Level 2 (NIST IAL2) standard.

Furthermore, for a confined or incarcerated individual enrolled in an eligible prison education program, the Department will consider their identity to be verified if the individual's identity was verified by an authorized official at the correctional facility where the individual is confined or incarcerated. More detailed information on these updates can be found in *Federal Register* notice [90 FR 34486](#)  and [Electronic Announcement APP-25-16](#). We also published frequently asked questions (FAQs) related to identity verification on the Department's Office of Postsecondary Education ([OPE](#)) [policy guidance website](#) ; click on "Identity Verification."

Dear Colleague:

On September 4, 2024, we published a *Federal Register* notice [89 FR 71893](#)  announcing the 2025–2026 *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA[®]) verification items for applicants selected by the Department as well as the acceptable documentation for those items.

This Dear Colleague Letter (DCL) summarizes and explains the changes in the verification process for the 2025–2026 award year. Additionally, at the end of this DCL, we have provided suggested text that an institution may use to fulfill its regulatory verification requirements.

Changes for the 2025–2026 Award Year

The verification completion process for the 2025–2026 award year will largely be unchanged. The direct data exchange (FA-DDX) between the U.S. Department of Education and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) will continue to import most U.S. income and tax information to the FAFSA form. The federal tax information (FTI) that is transferred via the FA-DDX to the FAFSA form will continue to be considered verified for *Title IV* purposes. Therefore, institutions are not required to collect a Tax Return Transcript or a signed copy of the 2023 income tax return if FTI was successfully transferred.

Individuals Who Are Victims of IRS Tax-related Identity Theft

In the past we have requested individuals who are victims of IRS tax-related identity theft to obtain a Tax Return DataBase View (TRDBV) transcript from the IRS for verification purposes. However, the Department is aware that TRDBV transcript requests have been taking over a year to process. Due to the long processing time, we will instead require individuals who are victims of IRS tax-related identity theft to provide a copy of their signed 2023 income tax return and applicable schedules. In addition, individuals must also provide an IRS 4674C letter (a letter from the IRS acknowledging the identity theft) or a statement signed and dated by the tax filer indicating that he or she was a victim of IRS tax-related identity theft, and the IRS is aware of it.

Students Who Are Confined or Incarcerated

For students who are confined or incarcerated, the same verification requirements for the 2024–2025 award year will apply for the 2025–2026 award year. A confined or incarcerated student (as indicated through the incarcerated applicant flag) will only be required to verify their identity and sign the statement of educational purpose when they are selected for Verification Tracking Group V4 or V5. Acceptable documentation of identity includes official IDs issued by the correctional facility. In addition, institutions are not required to verify a confined or incarcerated student selected under Verification Tracking Group V1.

If a confined or incarcerated student is unable to submit a signed and notarized Statement of Educational Purpose, a school may accept a signed statement from an authorized official who works for the correctional facility or the oversight entity confirming to the school that the individual who completed the FAFSA form and was selected for verification is the person signing the Statement of Educational Purpose.

For more information on prison education programs please see: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/topics/prison-education-programs>.

Suggested Verification Text

In APPENDIX A, we provide the suggested text for each of the 2025–2026 verification items in the September 4, 2024, *Federal Register* notice. While use of the suggested text fulfills the regulatory verification requirements, institutions are not required to use the Department's suggested text and formats, except as noted below. Instead, institutions may develop and use their own text, forms, documents, statements, and certifications that are specific to the items required to be verified for a particular student or group of students. The one exception is that institutions must use the exact language in the "Statement of Educational Purpose" in APPENDIX A for students who are placed in Verification Tracking Group V4 or V5.

Note that for the 2025–2026 award year, we have moved the educational purpose statements to the end of the appendix since they must be used verbatim and are separate documents with their own certification and signature. The signature pages for the other verification documents are now on pages 9 and 10, directly following the documents for non-tax filers and family size.

We suggest that each page of an institutionally developed verification document include appropriate headings and numbering that identify the item(s) being verified. Institutions should ensure that the verification document collects the student's name, ID number, and other identifying information as determined by the institution so that each page is identified as belonging to that student. Also, because institutions may on occasion have difficulty matching tax return documentation with a particular student if, for example, the last names are different or if portions of the tax filer's identifiers are redacted, we recommend that institutions advise students to write their own name on tax documents (when those are required) prior to submitting them to the institution. Verification documents should include any necessary special instructions so that students will know when and how documents are to be submitted to the institution. Institutions are reminded that documentation obtained as part of the verification process must be maintained at the institution for at least the required *Title IV* record retention period as outlined in [Volume 2 of the Federal Student Aid Handbook](#).

We thank institutions for their cooperation and continued role in safeguarding the integrity of the *Title IV* programs and in preventing improper payments.

Sincerely,

Dr. Nasser H. Paydar
Assistant Secretary
Office of Postsecondary Education

Attachment

The U.S. Department of Education strives to make all content accessible to everyone. While this document does not currently meet the standards of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Federal Student Aid is working to create accessible version. If you need access to this document before the accessible version is available, please contact the Information Technology Accessibility Program Help Desk at ITAPSupport@ed.gov to help facilitate.

[Verification of 2023 Income Information for Student Tax Filers in PDF Format, 13 Pages, 257KB](#)