

Financial Aid Application Verification

What is Verification? As colleges review each financial aid application, they may request documentation from a family that supports the information reported on the application, a process called Verification. Students may be selected for Verification by the Department of Education (Federal Verification) or by the college (Institutional Verification). In either case, the financial aid office at the college will need to confirm that the information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and other aid applications matches federal tax data and is accurate and complete.

How will students know if they have been selected for Verification? The Student Aid Report (SAR), the report students receive after the FAFSA has been processed, will indicate if a student's FAFSA has been selected for Federal Verification by the Department of Education. The college will also notify a student if the student has been selected for Federal or Institutional Verification, and will inform the student of documentation needed.

What information will be verified? The financial aid office may need to verify certain information from the federal tax return, such as Adjusted Gross Income and federal tax liability. Other items that may need to be verified are untaxed income, household size, number of students in college and child support paid, if applicable.

What documentation will be requested? If a family needs to verify federal tax data, the family will be required to utilize the FAFSA IRS Data Retrieval Tool or submit an official Tax Return Transcript. The IRS Data Retrieval Tool allows an individual to transmit federal tax data from the IRS to a FAFSA, and meets the needs of Federal Verification. Families selected for Federal Verification who are not able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool are required to submit an official Tax Return Transcript to the financial aid office. If the college is verifying non-tax information, the college will notify the family of additional documentation needed. It's a good idea for students to check with colleges a few weeks after submitting a FAFSA to see if any additional paperwork is needed. Families should always forward documentation to colleges as soon as possible.

How do families obtain an official Tax Return Transcript? An official Tax Return Transcript can be requested in one of three ways:

- Online: www.irs.gov. Click "Get Transcript of Your Tax Records" under "Tools."
- Phone: (800) 908-9946
- Paper Request Form: IRS Form 4506-T. Mail or fax the completed form to the contact information displayed on the form.

Tax filers can expect to receive the transcript immediately if using the online option, and within 5-10 days after the IRS receives the request if using the phone or paper form option.

What happens if a family is selected for Verification but does not file taxes? If a student is selected for Verification and the student and/or parent(s) does not file taxes, the family should follow the instructions provided by the financial aid office.

How can families prepare for Verification? It's a good idea for families to start a financial aid file to include documentation such as financial statements used to complete the financial aid applications, financial aid application logins and passwords and financial aid award letters. Below is a list of items to consider including in a financial aid file:

- ___ Year-end bank statements and account summaries
- ___ Year-end pay stubs, W2s and 1099s
- ___ Most recently completed tax returns and/or official Tax Return Transcript
- ___ Copy of any correspondence with financial aid offices
- ___ Outside scholarship information