



The University of Mississippi

Office of Financial Aid

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Policy Name: FAFSA Processing

Purpose: This document contains the Office of Financial Aid's current policies and procedures for loading Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data submitted by students.

Disclaimer: This policy is subject to change, without notice, in order to comply with administrative and regulatory requirements. All policies and procedures below are in accordance with the [Federal Student Aid Handbook](#).

Policy Contents:

- 12.0 FAFSA Load Overview
- 12.1 FAFSA Load Requirements and Procedures
- 12.2 Detecting and Resolving Issues Preventing FAFSA Loads
- 12.3 Subsequent FAFSA Loads

Definitions and Terms:

CPS – Central Processing System
DOB – Date of Birth
EFC – Expected Family Contribution
FAFSA – Free Application for Federal Student Aid
FSEOG – Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant
ISIR – Institutional Student Information Record (processed FAFSA)
NSLDS – National Student Loan Data System
OFA – Office of Financial Aid
ProSAM – OFA database system
SSN – Social Security Number
TEACH – Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education

Each year, students apply for Federal Title IV aid (Federal Pell Grant, Iraq & Afghanistan Service Grant, FSEOG, TEACH, Federal Work-Study, Direct Loans, and PLUS loans), as well as need-based state and institutional aid, using the FAFSA. This application is available to both undergraduate and graduate/professional students at www.fafsa.gov. It must be submitted annually to the U.S. Department of Education's CPS (the application opens October 1 each year).

Students choose which institutions of higher learning can access their processed FAFSA data by providing the appropriate school codes when they apply. UM receives applications electronically and stores the information in its financial aid database, ProSAM (a Sigma Systems product). Each record contains the student's responses to all FAFSA items, as well as key processing results and the student's financial aid history (as maintained by NSLDS).

The OFA works to detect and resolve issues that prevent FAFSAs from loading by instructing students to correct erroneous FAFSA information, or by making revisions administratively to a student's FAFSA when appropriate.

The financial aid database contains admitted students only. Therefore, the OFA can only load FAFSAs for fully admitted students with an established ProSAM record. If a student is not fully admitted, but submitted a FAFSA with the UM school code, then that student's FAFSA record will be held electronically in a suspense (pending) file until the student is admitted – at which point the FAFSA can be manually and/or automatically loaded to ProSAM.

In the financial aid database, the award “year” is set up so that it can identify each student as undergraduate (e.g., 2020, representing 2019-20) or graduate/professional (2020GR) based on his/her UM admission status. Since FAFSAs are year-specific, ProSAM will attempt to match the FAFSA information with the student's admissions status before loading to ensure that the data is not inconsistent.

For processing purposes, the OFA database system assigns students on an annual basis to a single, mutually-exclusive “track” (or category). The default track is “No FAFSA Submitted”. Following FAFSA loads, the track will change to one of the types below:

- Valid ISIR – Not Selected for Verification
- Correction Returning from CPS
- Dependent Selected for Verification
- Error – Student Not Assigned a Track in Batch
- Independent Selected for Verification
- Institutionally Selected for Verification (dependent or independent)

- Invalid – ISIR and Admission Program Type Mismatch
- Rejected –No EFC Calculated
- Student has ISIR/Waived Verification
- Track for Correction Records

In general, these distinctions are based on whether the FAFSA has been selected for verification or not, or is rejected. In addition, there are several error tracks that must be monitored. One track, “Student has ISIR/Waived Verification”, can only be set manually by an OFA staff member upon the request of a student who does not plan to complete the process and wants to opt out of any automatic reminders. (These students will not qualify for federal or need-based aid.) For more information about verification, refer to policy [“3.5 Verification”](#).

Data from a student’s FAFSA is accessible throughout the ProSAM system, and a printable version of the compiled FAFSA is available for use by the OFA or student as needed.

Part 12.2

Detecting and Resolving Issues Preventing FAFSA Loads

The OFA works to detect and resolve issues that prevent FAFSA loads, particularly for, but not limited to, the following conditions:

- **No FAFSA Submitted** – The student neglected to include the UM school code, or incorrectly answered questions on the FAFSA regarding the student’s grade level. The OFA would request that the student make changes to the FAFSA (to include the school code), or staff could make corrections administratively (for items like erroneous grade level) if the correct information can be verified through UM’s own records.
- **Rejected –No EFC Calculated** – Parent information is missing on the FAFSA (for dependent students), or FAFSA was not signed. The OFA would instruct the student to correct FAFSA to include parent information and/or signatures. Or, when parent information is missing, the OFA may determine, through communication with the student, if the student is eligible for consideration for a dependency status change through professional judgment (i.e., Dependency Override).
- **Track for Correction Records** – A mismatch exists between the DOB that was entered on the student’s FAFSA as compared to the DOB that appears in the student’s financial aid record. The OFA would instruct the student to correct the FAFSA if the DOB is correct in ProSAM but incorrect on the FAFSA, OR to provide a copy of the student’s driver’s license (or other documentation verifying the student’s DOB) to UM’s Registrar’s Office if the DOB is correct on the FAFSA but incorrect in the student’s financial aid database record.

Aside from the above conditions that prevent FAFSA loads, if there are other discrepancies between certain information on the student's FAFSA and that in the student's financial aid database record (i.e., name, year, SSN), the student's FAFSA is relegated to a holding file for partial matches (the "Preprocessor") in ProSAM. The OFA reviews these on a case-by-case basis to determine the reason for the mismatch, and with proper information/documentation, the OFA may manually load the FAFSA from the Preprocessor. The list below provides a general overview of procedures the OFA follows to resolve suspended ISIRs in the Preprocessor:

- **Name Mismatch** – If the student's DOB and SSN match, the OFA must verify the student's correct last name. If the student's last name is correct on the FAFSA but incorrect in student records, the OFA would instruct the student to correct their last name in UM's records (which may require additional documentation submitted to Admissions or the Registrar). If the student's last name is incorrect on the FAFSA, the OFA would instruct the student to correct the FAFSA. Certain conditions regarding name mismatches (like the inclusion or exclusion of special characters like apostrophes or hyphens) may be resolved by simply loading the FAFSA manually from the Preprocessor, provided the OFA can verify the student's identity.
- **Year Mismatch** – If the student's name, DOB, and SSN match, the OFA must determine the accuracy of the student's grade level. If the OFA can verify the accuracy of the student's grade level in university records, the OFA may make the FAFSA corrections (i.e., if correcting information from undergraduate to graduate), or instruct the student to correct the FAFSA (if correcting information from graduate to undergraduate which may then necessitate the student answer other dependency status questions, and include parent information on the FAFSA). The OFA never manually loads ISIRs with a year mismatch.
- **SSN Mismatch** – If the student's last name and DOB match, the OFA would instruct the student to provide a copy of the Social Security Card with SSN to the Admissions Office to correct information in university records. Or, the OFA would instruct the student to re-submit a FAFSA with a correct SSN if the SSN is incorrect on the FAFSA. The OFA never manually loads ISIRs with SSN mismatch.

Part 12.3

Subsequent ISIR Loads

When changes are made to a processed FAFSA (by the student, the school, or CPS), CPS creates another "transaction" (or version) of the application. The original transaction for that award year is numbered "01", and subsequent versions are "02" and beyond. Although the ProSAM system stores all FAFSA data, only one transaction is active for display and processing at a time (unless the student has both an undergraduate and a graduate/professional record open in a given year).

The OFA loads all subsequent ISIRs (provided the ISIR includes the UM school code) when FAFSA corrections have been made by the applicant (student/parent), the OFA, another institution, or the federal processor (CPS). The database system generates a status of “previously awarded” or “already verified” if these processes occurred prior to the new FAFSA being received. The system also generates a report for each of these statuses that are regularly reviewed by OFA staff to verify accuracy of financial aid awarding when the “previously awarded” or “already verified” status appears in a student’s financial aid record. The review of these reports also assists in resolving conflicting information when comparing FAFSAs (see policy [“13.0 Conflicting Information”](#)).

If a subsequent FAFSA is selected for verification by the federal processor, AND a student has been awarded federal or need-based aid on a previous ISIR that was NOT selected for verification, the OFA requires the student to complete verification in order to retain any federal or need-based aid. If changes in an applicant’s FAFSA causes verification selection (and/or a change in the student’s eligibility for federal or need-based aid), and the student does not complete verification, paybacks on aid already awarded would result.