

# Tips for Completing the FAFSA & Verification

Please read each question on the FAFSA carefully and answer accurately. After completing the FAFSA and each subsequent correction to the FAFSA, you will receive a Student Aid Report (SAR) from the Federal Processor. READ every SAR entirely, especially the comments section. The SAR will notify you if your application has been selected for Verification. If selected, please submit all documents as soon as possible to the ETSU Office of Financial Aid. Any discrepancy must be verified by our office per federal guidelines. This will slow down the processing of your assistance. The verification process can take several weeks for completion. Your patience is appreciated. Below are some tips and information that can help with completing the FAFSA and Verification (if selected).

## **Information & Tips**

At least 30% of all students who file a FAFSA will be selected for verification by the Federal Processor.


Of the 30% selected, 60% do not complete their verification paperwork correctly, or they have not completed their FAFSA correctly.

When completing your FAFSA be sure to follow the instructions given and review your information for accuracy before submitting your application.

You must use the name printed on your current Social Security Card on the FAFSA.

If the wrong Social Security Number is used when filing the FAFSA, **DO NOT** make a correction to this number. **YOU MUST** file a new FAFSA.

Read each line item on the FAFSA carefully especially when answering questions concerning household size, number in college, adjusted gross income, taxes paid, and marital status.

 **When submitting verification documents to our office, be sure all documents requiring a signature are signed, all worksheets are fully completed, and student's name and E# are on every document. Submit copies, and keep originals for your own personal records.**

## **Initial Verification Documentation**

- **Verification worksheet:**
  - Complete entire worksheet.
  - Please read Family Information (Section B) instructions VERY carefully. The most common mistakes on the FAFSA and Verification Worksheets are made in determining household size. Review "Tips for Determining Household Size" below.
  - In sections E through G, each blank must contain a numerical value. If the answer is "0", write "0" in the blank. (Do not write in the following: "/", "N/A", "—", etc. and do not leave any empty blanks.)
  - Students should complete the appropriate Verification Worksheet based on the dependency status as determined by the FAFSA.
  - [Dependent Verification Worksheet](#) should be completed and signed by both the student and parent.
  - [Independent Verification Worksheet](#) should be completed and signed by the student and student's spouse if married.
  - Any discrepancies between the information on the FAFSA and the Verification Worksheet should be explained in writing and signed by the student, if independent, or the parent, if dependent. Further documentation may be required to resolve the discrepancy.

- **Federal Tax Returns:**
  - Dependent students should submit SIGNED copies of their tax return and parents' tax return(s).
  - Independent students should submit SIGNED copies of their tax return and spouse's tax return if married.
  - If there is business income on line 12 of the tax return, then a copy of the Schedule C or C-EZ must be provided.
  - Incorrectly filed tax returns may result in the need for a 1040X (Amended Tax Return) to be submitted.
  - Altered tax returns will NOT be accepted.
- **W-2 forms:**
  - Submit ALL W-2 forms for the corresponding tax year.
  - Total of W-2 forms submitted must equal the amount on the wages line of the tax return submitted.
  - W-2 forms must be legible.
  - If you are missing any W-2 forms, you can obtain a Wage & Income Transcript from the [IRS](#) (1-800-829-1040).

⚠ **Many times the documentation we receive is not complete. Once reviewed, if additional information is requested, please provide it as soon as possible as we process all paperwork in date order and this could delay your aid.**

### Tips for Determining Household Size

#### **Independent Students:**

- Only include you, your spouse (if legally married), your legal dependents, and others for whom you provide MORE than 50% of their support (proof WILL BE REQUIRED).
- If you are separated or divorced, DO NOT include your spouse or any of their information (wages/income, tax paid, etc).

#### **Dependent Students:**

- Use the household of the parent you live with or who provides MORE than 50% of your support on the FAFSA. It has nothing to do with who claimed you as a dependent on the tax return.
- If the parents are divorced and have joint custody (50/50), use the parent you either live with the majority of the time or who provides MORE than 50% of your support. If the parent you use is remarried, you must include the step-parent and their tax information as well. If the parent lives with a boyfriend/girlfriend they cannot be included since they are not legally married unless the parent can prove they provide MORE than 50% of their support.
- Other people who are age 24 or older can be included in the household size only if you can show proof that your parent(s) (head of household) are providing MORE than 50% of their support.
- If other people under age 24 such as nieces, nephews, cousins, etc. live in your household and your parent(s) provide more than 50% of their support, you must submit documentation of support from the head of household and the biological parent of those children. Court documentation of guardianship can be provided as well.

### Questions?

Contact the [Office of Financial Aid](#).