

2024-25 FAFSA CHANGES

A new and simpler FAFSA Application is coming for the 2024-2025 academic year. However, because of these changes, the new FAFSA Form will NOT be available on October 1st as it normally is. For this year only, the FAFSA Form is scheduled for release in December 2023.

But don't worry, we expect the FAFSA to be available on October 1st again for the 2025-2026 Academic year.

How the FAFSA Simplification Act Affects You

The FAFSA Simplification Act was passed by Congress in 2020 and represents a significant update to the processes and systems used to award federal student aid. This includes updates to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, the need analysis that determines federal aid eligibility, changes in terminology and many policies and procedures for schools that participate in federal student aid programs.

2024-2025 FAFSA Available in December 2023

Historically, the FAFSA has been available beginning October 1st each year. However, because of significant changes to the application and the rebuild of the FAFSA processing system, the 2024-25 FAFSA will not be available until sometime in December 2023. Updates on an exact date will be posted here when announced.

What's changing with the FAFSA?

There are a number of benefits of the FAFSA simplification act, including a more streamlined application process and a better user experience for the FAFSA, expanded eligibility for federal student aid, and reduced barriers for certain student populations (e.g., homeless and unaccompanied youth, incarcerated students, English language learners, and students from low-income backgrounds). Some fundamental changes include, but are not limited to:

The FAFSA will be shorter and more user-friendly.

The FAFSA will reduce the maximum number of questions from 108 to 46. And because the FAFSA on the Web is dynamic, some students won't even be presented with all 46 questions. This streamlined format will simplify the application process and make it less daunting for students and their families.

The FAFSA will be available in more languages

Currently, the FAFSA is only available in English and Spanish. The 2024-25 application will be expanded to include the 11 most common languages spoken by English learner students and their parents.

Colleges List

Student may now list up to 20 colleges to receive FAFSA information.

Applicants will be required to use the IRS Direct Data Exchange.

Previously, users had the option to enter their tax information manually or use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool. Beginning with 2024-25, all persons on the FAFSA must provide consent for the Department of Education to receive tax information or confirmation of non-filing status directly from the IRS. This change makes it easier to complete the FAFSA and reduces the number of questions to be answered.

All “Contributors” must provide financial information.

A contributor—a new term being introduced on the 2024-25 FAFSA—refers to anyone who is required to provide information on a student's form (such as a parent/stepparent or spouse). A student's or parent's answers on the FAFSA will determine which contributors (if any) will be required to provide information.

Contributors will receive an email informing them that they've been identified as such, and will need to log in using their own FSA ID (or create if they don't already have one) to provide the required information on the student's FAFSA.

Being a contributor does not mean they are financially responsible for the student's education costs, but it does mean the contributor must provide information on the FAFSA or the application will be incomplete and the student will not be eligible for federal student aid.

The Student Aid Index (SAI) is replacing Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

A notable terminology update within the new FAFSA is the replacement of the term Expected Family Contribution (EFC) with the Student Aid Index (SAI). This name more accurately describes the number used to determine aid eligibility and, unlike the EFC, the SAI may be a negative number down to -1500.

The number in college will not be used to calculate SAI.

Previously, the FAFSA calculated the number of household members attending college into the EFC, dividing it proportionately to determine federal aid eligibility. Beginning with the 2024-25 FAFSA, the application will still ask how many household members are in college, but your answer will not be calculated into the SAI. As such, undergraduate students with siblings in college may see a change in their federal aid eligibility.

Some students will automatically be awarded the Pell Grant.

Families making less than 175% and single parents making less than 225% of the federal poverty level will see their students receive a maximum Federal Pell Grant award. Minimum Pell Grants will be guaranteed to students from households below 275%, 325%, 350%, or 400% of the poverty level, depending on household structure. Pell awards between the maximum and minimum amounts will be determined by SAI.

The parent responsible for submitting the FAFSA in cases of divorce or separation has changed.

For dependent students, financial information was previously needed from the parent(s) the student had lived with the most in the last 12 months. With the new FAFSA, financial information will be required from the parent(s) who provided the most financial support to the student.

What isn't changing?

While the FAFSA is receiving an update and the aid eligibility calculation has been revised, there are a number of aid-related matters that will not change.

- The FAFSA will still be required for consideration of federal and state financial aid every year.
- Dependency status questions that determine if your parent(s) must complete the FAFSA will remain the same.
- The FAFSA will still request tax information from the prior-prior year, which means you'll report 2022 income and assets on your 2024-25 application. Families with significant reductions in income can consider submitting an appeal.
- The questions regarding an applicant's gender, race, and ethnicity will have no effect on federal student aid eligibility and are included for statistical purposes and data collection only. In fact, UTRGV won't even receive this data from the FAFSA.

When should I submit the 2024-25 FAFSA?

Students who plan to begin classes at UTRGV in the fall of 2024 should complete the FAFSA as soon as it becomes available in December.

Disclaimer

The UTRGV Office of Financial Aid is dedicated to providing timely updates to students, families, and our community. Due to the significant amount of changes that are occurring, portions of our website may not yet be 100% accurate for the 2024-2025 academic year. We'll continue to update this page as we receive more information from the Department of Education and Federal Student Aid, and appreciate your patience as we work to implement the changes brought by the FAFSA Simplification Act.