

Financial Aid Verification

Overview

Verification is a process that all schools participating in the Title IV programs must complete for selected files in order to confirm the accuracy of student and family information submitted on the FAFSA. Verification is undergone to comply with federal regulations designed to ensure equal and fair treatment of all potential aid recipients - to prevent individuals from receiving aid for which they do not qualify and alternately to ensure that students receive the optimal amount of aid for which they are eligible.

Verification Selection

The Department of Education's Central Processing System (CPS) selects students for verification through a method of data based statistical analysis. The emphasis of selection is to flag applications with the highest probability of error and subsequent errors in aid eligibility. Sofia University is required by the federal government to verify, or confirm, the data reported on the FAFSA for all flagged SARs/ISIRs. Selection for verification is most easily identified by the presence of an asterisk (*) next to the student's EFC value and can be done at random or due to incomplete or inconsistent information on the FAFSA.

Sofia University may also select additional applications for verification beyond those required, and in these cases the institution decides upon which items to verify. If there is reason to believe that any information on an application used to calculate an EFC is inaccurate, the Financial Aid Office must require the applicant to verify the information that it has reason to believe is inaccurate. Students with these applications are considered to be selected for verification by the institution, even though it may not be verifying the same data as for CPS selected applications.

All students selected for verification will be notified via appointment prior to enrollment, either in person or on the phone, and will be presented with a letter and verification paperwork either in person or by email outlining the required documentation to complete the process. Depending on which verification group is assigned by CPS, the following may require supplementary documentation to be verified:

- High School Completion Status
- Identity/Statement of Educational Purpose
- Number of Household Members
- Number in College
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP-Food Stamps)
- Child Support Paid
- Adjusted Gross Income
- U.S. Income Tax Paid
- Income earned from work

- Untaxed Portions of IRA Distributions
- Untaxed Portions of Pensions
- RA Deductions and Payments
- Tax Exempt Interest Income
- Education Credits

Time Period for Submission of Verification Paperwork

If selected for verification, the student must comply with all requests for documentation from the Financial Aid office. Failure to comply will result in financial aid ineligibility. All verification documents must be submitted prior to a student's financial aid entrance counseling at the end of his or her trial phase, the first ten class days following the program start date. Students who have not completed the verification process prior to the end of the trial phase will not be eligible for financial aid for the respective enrollment, but may be eligible to use financial aid funds at a later start date if the verification process can be completed before the end of the new trial phase.

In the case where a student is not initially selected for verification, but makes changes to his or her FAFSA and is selected for verification after the changes are processed – verification must be completed prior to any subsequent disbursement.

Correction of Errors / Notification of Award Changes

The Financial Aid office will make changes to student's FAFSA information resulting from errors identified through the verification process. The student will receive notification of the correction via CPS. If verification results in changes to a student's financial aid award or eligibility the student will be notified via appointment, in person or on the phone, or in writing via email.

Overpayments

If it is determined as a result of the verification process that an applicant received loan proceeds for an award year in excess of the student's financial need for the loan, the College shall withhold and promptly return any disbursement not yet delivered to the student that exceeds the amount for which the student is eligible, taking into account other financial aid received by the student. If the College determines as a result of the verification process that a student received Direct Subsidized Loan proceeds for an award year in excess of the student's need for the loan, the College shall reduce or cancel one or more subsequent disbursements to eliminate the amount in excess of the student's need.

Referrals to the Office of Inspector General

Referrals for investigation to the Office of Inspector General (OIG) of the Department of Education will be made in any case in which fraud or other criminal activity is reasonably

suspected throughout the pre-enrollment interview process and review of FAFSA information. Such information could include:

- False claims of independent student status
- False claims of citizenship
- Use of false identities
- Forgery of signatures or certifications
- False statements of income

Any credible information indicating that any employee, third-party servicer, or other agent of the College that acts in a capacity that involves the administration of the Title IV, HEA programs, or the receipt of funds under those programs, may have engaged in fraud, misrepresentation, conversion or breach of fiduciary responsibility, or other illegal conduct involving the Title IV, HEA programs, will be referred to the OIG for investigation.