

Early FAFSA For 2017-2018



On September 14, 2015, President Obama announced significant changes to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process. If you plan to submit a FAFSA for the 2017-2018 academic year please read this important announcement.

Starting with the 2017-2018 academic year, students will be able to do the following:

- **Submit a FAFSA Earlier:** Students will be able to file a 2017-2018 FAFSA as early as October 1, 2016, rather than beginning on January 1, 2017. The earlier submission date will be a permanent change, enabling students to complete and submit a FAFSA as early as October 1 every year.
- **Use Earlier Income Information:** Beginning with the 2017-2018 FAFSA, students will report income information from one year earlier than had been collected previously—this is sometimes called “prior-prior year” information or PPY. For example, on the 2017-18 FAFSA, students (and parents, if applicable) will report their 2015 income tax information rather than their 2016 income information. The 2018-2019 FAFSA will request 2016 income and tax information; the 2019-2020 FAFSA will request 2017 income and tax information; and so on.

This means that both the 2016-17 FAFSA and the 2017-2018 FAFSA will collect and use 2015 income and tax information. This use of 2015 information applies to both student/spouse income and tax information, and, for dependent students, parental income and tax information.

Possibility of Conflicting Information

Although the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 FAFSAs should be completed using the same 2015 income tax information, there is the possibility that there may be conflicting information between the two FAFSAs. Federal student aid must be based on correct information. If there is conflicting information between the two FAFSA reporting years the conflicting information must be resolved before the college may disburse any federal aid for the **2016-2017** and **2017-2018** financial aid years.

After you complete and submit your 2017-2018 FAFSA the Department of Education’s Central Processing System (CPS) will perform a comparison between your last 2016-2017 FAFSA report and the 2017-2018 FAFSA report. This comparison will determine if any identified conflicting information would, once resolved, produce a significant change in your expected family contribution (EFC). If so, the CPS will flag your 2017-2018 FAFSA report notifying us that you have conflicting information. Your Student Aid Report (SAR) will also notify you if you need to resolve the conflicting information.

If your EFC changes as a result of the resolution of the conflicting information, and if you have a Federal Pell Grant as part of your 2016-2017 financial aid awards, we may need to adjust the amount of your Pell Grant for 2016-2017.

Follow these suggestions to avoid the possibility of conflicting information and a reduction of your federal aid:

Complete the 2017-2018 FAFSA as soon as possible

The earlier you submit your 2017-2018 FAFSA the sooner you and Hampshire will be notified if there is conflicting information and if we need to adjust your federal aid for 2016-17.

Use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT)

The most effective way to prevent conflicting information from occurring is to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT) for both FAFSA years. Because the 2017-2018 FAFSA will be requesting 2015 income and tax information almost all tax return filers will be able to electronically transfer their tax information directly into their FAFSA by using the DRT. If you have a Federal Pell Grant for 2016-2017 and did not use the DRT on your 2016-2017 FAFSA we **strongly suggest** that you consider doing this. For all others we suggest that you complete and submit the 2017-2018 FAFSA as soon as possible beginning October 1, 2016 and to use the DRT to import tax and income information. If we have DRT data from either year, and if there is conflicting information between the two years, we can use the DRT data to make a correction to the other FAFSA year. There are time restrictions as to when you or the financial aid office may make corrections to the 2016-2017 FAFSA so be sure to complete and submit your 2017-2018 FAFSA as soon as possible beginning October 1, 2016.

Warning Edits to 2017-2018 FAFSA applicants

For this one-year transition during which the same 2015 income and tax information should be reported on two different year FAFSAs, students who complete the FAFSA on the Web (www.fafsa.gov) will have new edits that warn them if one or more of the income or tax amounts they have input into their 2017-2018 FAFSA differs from the amount(s) that was reported on their 2016-2017 FAFSA. If you receive these pop-up warnings please be sure to review the information that you are attempting to enter on your FAFSA.

What if my 2016-2017 FAFSA was selected for the federal verification process?

If your 2016-2017 FAFSA was selected for the federal verification process and if the Hampshire College financial aid office verified your income and tax information on your 2016-2017 FAFSA report then we have accurate 2015 income and tax data. We will be able to use this verified data to make a correction to your 2017-2018 FAFSA if there is conflicting information. If your 2016-2017 FAFSA was selected and verified please **DO NOT** make any corrections to your 2016-2017 FAFSA.

What if I am not able to use the IRS Data Retrieval Tool (DRT)?

Some students and parents are unable to use the DRT on the FAFSA because their tax filing status is Married filing separately, or the parents are unmarried but living together, or because of the type of tax return (foreign, Puerto Rico, or other U.S. territory return). If your 2017-18 FAFSA indicates conflicting information and you are not able to use the DRT then we will need a 2015 IRS Tax Return Transcript for U.S. filers or a signed paper copy of the foreign and U.S. territory return. We can use these documents to make corrections to either the 2016-2017 or the 2017-2018 FAFSA. Instructions on how to request an IRS Tax Return Transcript appears on our Web page: <https://financialaid.hampshire.edu>.

Work with the financial aid office to resolve any conflicting information

The financial aid office at Hampshire College is here to assist you with your aid applications for both federal and institutional aid. If your 2017-2018 FAFSA reveals that there is conflicting information please work with our office to get this situation resolved as quickly as possible.

Other Considerations

Conflicting information may occur even if you use the DRT: For example, tax deferred pension payments, child support paid or received, housing allowances, and earnings from work for each individual parent, are not part of the DRT process. Be sure that the responses to these questions match on both the 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 FAFSA forms.

Until the conflicting information issue is resolved, Hampshire College may not disburse any 2016-2017 or 2017-2018 Federal Title IV aid (Federal Grants, Perkins Loans, Direct Subsidized Loans). Avoid having conflicting information by following the suggested guidelines above.

In cases in which Hampshire is unable to resolve the conflicting information by April 15, 2017, either because the student did not respond to Hampshire's request for information or because the student did not adequately clarify the reasons for the conflicting information, we must consider the student to be in an over-award status for any need-based 2016-2017 Federal Title IV aid (Federal Grants, Perkins Loans, Direct Subsidized Loans). In the case of Federal Grants and Perkins Loans, the student will need to establish a satisfactory repayment plan with the U.S. Department of Education. Plan to submit your 2017-2018 FAFSA as soon as possible beginning October 1, 2016 and to work with the staff in the financial aid office to resolve any conflicting information to avoid an over-award situation.

The 2017-2018 CSS Profile will also be asking for 2015 income and tax information. If you are required to complete the Profile as part of your 2017-2018 financial aid application be sure that your Profile contains matching information for all comparable questions on the FAFSA. If these responses on the Profile do not match those on the FAFSA it will create conflicting information between the Profile and FAFSA forms which will need to be resolved. **You may submit your 2017-2018 CSS Profile as early as October 1, 2016.**

If you are eligible for a State Grant (Massachusetts or Vermont) your State Grant may also need to be adjusted if there is conflicting information. Avoid having a conflicting information situation to protect your federal and state aid.

If you have any questions about the Early FAFSA please contact us:

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