

Federal Verification

What is Verification?

Each year the U.S. Department of Education selects financial aid applicants for Federal verification review. This process requires Lock Haven University (LHU) to verify the accuracy of the information provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). For purposes of this review, students who wish to receive federal financial aid (including loans) are required to complete paperwork and submit supporting documentation to the LHU Financial Aid Office. The Financial Aid office staff will review the information and make any changes to the FAFSA if needed.

Why was I selected?

There are various reasons why a FAFSA applicant may be selected for verification. Perhaps the FAFSA included estimates of federal income tax information and the actual information now needs to be confirmed. Or maybe the FAFSA was submitted with data that appears inconsistent or unusual, or includes the type of information that is frequently misreported. Finally, you may have been selected for verification through a random process used to get a sampling of how accurately families fill out the FAFSA.

What happens if my FAFSA is selected for verification review?

If your application is selected for verification review, the Student Aid Report (SAR) you receive from the Federal Processor will say so. The LHU Financial Aid Office will also notify you that your FAFSA has been selected for verification, will ask you to complete our form(s), and submit supporting documentation of the information you used to complete your FAFSA.

Please provide your verification information as quickly as possible. Given the large number of financial aid applications we receive, it may take an extended time before we work on your aid application; however, we process the completed applications in the order we receive them. Sometimes while reviewing the verification information we find inconsistent information or errors that must be resolved which may create delays in processing. You can help avoid this delay by making sure that you provide accurate and complete verification information. In some circumstances we may need to request additional information from you, so watch carefully for new correspondence from us.

What documents do I have to submit and to whom?

Each situation is reviewed on an individual basis, so it is difficult to say what each student is required to submit. With that being said, many of our students selected for verification are required to provide the following items:

1. Institutional Verification Form, signed by the student and a parent.
2. W-2 forms for parents and students who received wages from an employer
3. Copies of Schedule C's for students and parents who had their own business
4. Proof of child support paid or received, if applicable.
5. Proof of receipt of SNAP benefits, if applicable.
6. Student IRS Tax Return Transcript (If unable to use the IRS data retrieval tool) if the student filed a federal income tax form.
7. Parent IRS Tax Return Transcript (If unable to use the IRS data retrieval tool) if the parent filed a federal income tax form.

The Institutional Verification Form is provided by the Financial Aid Office and must be completed and signed by the parent and student.

W2 forms are provided by the employer and are sent to the employee by the end of January of the next tax year. Persons receive a W2 for each employer they had during that given year. The Financial Aid Office will need a copy of each W2 for parents and students who were employed.

A schedule C is part included with a person's federal income taxes if the person has income earned from self-employment. There are details on the form that are helpful to review when completing the verification process.

If a parent paid or received a child support it is recommended that official documentation be supplied that verifies the amount paid or received. If no official documentation can be found, a signed statement that includes this information will be accepted in most cases.

If a family received SNAP benefits, previously referred to as Food Stamps, they are urged to supply official documentation. This can be found by contacting the Public Assistance Office who issued the benefit.

When parents and students are unable to use the IRS data retrieval tool, which links the FAFSA with the IRS Tax Return, they must provide a Tax Return Transcript. The Tax Return Transcript is a document that is created by the IRS office and it is **not a copy** of the 1040. Unfortunately the Federal Processor will not allow us to accept a copy of the 1040. Families can request a transcript online. To make an online request go to <http://www.irs.gov/>.

For tips on how to request a transcript, please see the [Tax Return Transcript Tip Sheet](#).

As mentioned above, a way to avoid having to request the transcript is to utilize the Data Retrieval Tool on the FAFSA. This option can be used when filing a FAFSA 2 weeks after filing taxes online or 6 weeks after filing by mail. This process will be used to document the Adjusted

Gross Income, taxes paid, and other tax data. To watch a brief tutorial containing step-by-step instructions on how to submit corrections on your FAFSA using the IRS Data Retrieval Tool, go to http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W47_YTRVYD4.

Are any deadlines associated with Verification?

Students should submit all required verification documents to the Financial Aid Office within 30 days of the initial request. If you do not submit your verification documents in a timely manner, the processing and disbursement of your federal financial aid will be delayed. A delay may result in your having to pay all of or part of your student bill until processing is complete.

What does the Financial Aid Office do with my documents?

The documents submitted become part of the LHU financial aid file. The information on those documents is compared to the FAFSA information provided to us by the Federal FAFSA Processor.

I thought I already turned in the documents required for verification. Why do you need more information?

For many students, the process consists simply of a review of the federal tax information, W-2 forms, and the Verification Form they submit. But sometimes we discover inconsistencies which must be resolved. When this happens, we typically send requests for additional information by mail.

If my FAFSA is selected for verification, what can I do to speed up the review process?

- Submit all requested documents to the Financial Aid Office as soon as possible.
- Submit all requested documents at the same time.
- Make sure the documents you submit are legible and signed where applicable.
- Make sure all documents submitted are clearly labeled with the student's name and LHU ID number.
- Please be patient. A large number of student applications are verified, and it takes time for our staff to process the large volume of paper work. Periodically checking on the status of your file is a good idea.

What happens if something was filled out incorrectly on my FAFSA?

If any errors are found, we will correct your FAFSA. If the error(s) changes the amount of financial aid for which you are eligible, we will send you, by either mail or email to your LHU email account, a revised financial aid award notification. In addition, the Federal FAFSA Processor will send you a revised Student Aid Report (SAR), which will reflect the corrections we make to your FAFSA.

Please Note: Should we suspect that information was intentionally misreported or that documentation was altered to fraudulently obtain federal funds, we must report the suspicions and evidence to the Office of Inspector General.

LHU Financial Aid Office

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