Draft sample FAFSA Q&A for students
Provided by the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges
Updated March 21, 2024

Note to system: You can always find the latest version of this document on the [Financial Aid Council web page](#).

Dear financial aid applicants:

As you may have heard, there have been significant delays with the nationwide rollout of the new Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that will affect every college and university in the country, including xxxx College. The Department of Education delays, coupled with the need to rewrite software for processing data, will prevent our financial aid office from notifying students of their financial aid information for the 2024-25 academic year until mid-June at the earliest.

We recognize that college costs play a huge role in your ability to choose a college and finish your studies. Our college financial aid office will do everything possible to package your aid as soon as possible.

We hope you find the following information helpful. Please continue to check this website often for updated information.

What can I do now?

Please don't give up hope! There is more financial aid available than ever before this year in the form of expanded eligibility for grants.

- Apply for 2024-25 financial aid online using the [FAFSA form](#). The FAFSA opened later than normal, but it's now available for all. The sooner you complete your 2024-25 FAFSA, the sooner we'll get it from U.S. Department of Education. This is especially important for students who plan to enroll for summer quarter.

- If you're ineligible to use the FAFSA (for example, due to citizenship or immigration status), submit a [Washington Application for State Financial Aid](#) (WASFA) financial aid application instead.

- Beware of phishing attempts to capture your financial aid login information, for both you and your "contributors."

- Colleges can also add bullets like "Attend a FAFSA workshop, contact our financial aid office during extended hours, sign up for text updates etc…"

What's the good news?

The new 2024-25 FAFSA is the most significant revamping of the FAFSA form since the 1980s. Benefits include:

- Shorter application: The FAFSA application is now shorter and, for many people, easier to complete.

- More federal aid: More people are eligible to receive federal Pell Grants, and the average grant is expected to be larger.

- Generous state aid: In Washington state, the Washington College Grant gives eligible people more money for more types of education like certificate programs, job training, apprenticeships, and degrees. The FAFSA form you fill out will also help Washington state determine your eligibility for the Washington College Grant.

What are the challenges?

Two big issues are causing delays in processing financial aid applications. First, the U.S. Department of Education started sending out students' financial aid information months later than usual. Second, it's taking time for higher education institutions to reconfigure financial aid processing software for the way data is now being delivered under the new FAFSA.

Here in Washington, community and technical colleges use PeopleSoft financial aid software, which is owned by Oracle. Instead of every college owning its own version of PeopleSoft, the Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges manages the software for all 34 colleges, a system it calls ctcLink. The State Board is waiting for Oracle to provide bug-free updates before the State Board can localize the software for Washington's community and technical college system. And even when the Oracle update happens, the State Board will need about six to eight weeks for migration, configuration, security analysis, and testing.

Until Oracle fixes glitches and the State Board updates and tests the software, no community or technical college in Washington can process student financial information and provide financial aid awards. At this point, the State Board estimates that it will complete its work by early- to mid-June, which means our college must wait until then to use the software.

All higher education institutions are facing software predicaments, regardless of which software they use to deliver and process financial aid.

What is xxx College doing to help students who may be in financial stress due to the financial aid delays?

Colleges will need to answer this question. College leadership can find advice in a document titled, "A Unified approach to FAFSA Simplification Implementation for Washington Community and Technical Colleges," available on the Financial Aid Council web page.

What's happening with the WASFA?

The Washington Application for State Financial Aid (WASFA) is for people who are undocumented or who do not qualify for federal financial aid but may qualify for state financial aid (the Washington College Grant). It can also be used by others in certain limited situations. The 2024-25 WASFA is open now and, like the FAFSA, it will have fewer questions and a simpler form. However, the FAFSA delays are also causing WASFA delays.

We understand the stress financial aid delays are causing and are exploring all options to help financial aid applicants through these difficult times. We will continue to provide updates on this webpage as we learn more.