**2021-2022 Academic Year Verification Temporary Policy**

**Background**

Effective July 13, 2021, the U.S. Department of Education has waived Title IV verification requirements for all students in the 2021-2022 academic year, except for those flagged for identity and high school completion statuses as well as any current conflicting information. The temporary policy is in effect for the 2021-22 academic year in response to the exception in Title IV regulatory requirements.

**Policy Statement**

Effective for 2021-2022 academic year only, West Chester University (WCU) will no longer postpone the awarding of federal financial aid for those who have an incomplete verification status. In response to the temporary exception provided by the Department of Education, the financial aid office will review all students selected for verification for title IV aid eligibility in advance of receiving additional documentation. If students do not currently have any conflicting information or additional action items on their student aid report, all tasks will be waived and title IV aid will be posted.

This regulatory exception does state that any changes made to FAFSA forms after aid is originally awarded will have to be reviewed for conflicting information and may result in additional actions by both the student and the financial aid office. Therefore, if students and their household have seen a change in circumstances since being awarded under this exception, they are encouraged to contact the financial aid office for a professional judgement review.

**Policy Framework**

The goal of West Chester University (WCU) is to support students in accessing maximum title IV aid eligibility in an effort to make a WCU education affordable. With that said, WCU recognizes the aforementioned exceptions outlined by the U. S. Department of Education’s Dear Colleague Letter ([GEN 21-05](https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2021-07-13/changes-2021-2022-verification-requirements)) and will award students for all eligible title IV aid programs without requiring additional documentation for verification unless conflicting information is received.

WCU Policy Process

Students must notify the Financial Aid Office if they or their household have any change in circumstances since receiving their financial aid award.

Verification Tasks Reviewed and/or Waived

All initiated verification tasks for students in specified verification groups will be waived. Any documents received for verification review before tasks are waived will be reviewed for conflicting information. If those documents do not have any conflicting information, all other incomplete tasks will be waived and verification will be updated to a completed status. Students will be notified of their updated status through email once their record and tasks are updated.

Financial Aid Awarding

After all relative tasks are waived and any received documents are reviewed, a student will be awarded any eligible title IV aid using the most recent FAFSA transaction received. Awarded students will be notified via an electronic award letter by email and text message.

Professional Judgement and Subsequent FAFSA Review

Students who believe they are eligible for additional aid due to incorrect or updated FAFSA information are encouraged to contact the Financial Aid office for a professional judgement review. Any changes made by the student or parents that result in conflicting information or changes in eligibility will be reviewed by the Financial Aid office and may result in action by the student to confirm or clarify conflicting reports.

**Definitions**

2021- 2022 Academic Year:

Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022 academic terms

Conflicting Information: Includes, but is not limited to reviewing:

* All subsequent ISIRs;
* Rejected ISIRS for missing signature;
* Comment Codes 400/401;
* IRS Request Flags “06” and “07;”
* Unsolicited verification and/or tax documents
* Conflicting tax status comment codes;
* Taxes paid and income are the same;
* Prior award year data

Title IV (federal) Aid Programs: Federal Pell Grant, Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grants (IASG), Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), TEACH Grants, and Direct Student Loans.

Verification:

Refers to the process intended to improve the accuracy of the information submitted on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA®) form and reduce incorrect payments to applicants. Verification publications are listed below.

Source: <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/functional-area/Verification>

**References:**

U. S. Department of Education’s Dear Colleague Letter ([GEN 21-05](https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/library/dear-colleague-letters/2021-07-13/changes-2021-2022-verification-requirements))

To provide relief to millions of students and colleges facing challenges and barriers resulting from the ongoing national emergency, we are focusing this award year’s effort strictly on identity and fraud. This means we are waiving verification of most Free Application for Federal Student Aid/Institutional Student Information Record (FAFSA®/ISIR) information, except for Identity/Statement of Educational Purpose and High School Completion Status under Verification Tracking Groups V4 and V5. This waiver may apply no matter where institutions are in the verification process, e.g., if documents have been collected or requested, but verification has not been completed, or if an institution has not started the verification process. However, this does not exempt institutions from reviewing all documents for conflicting information concerning a student’s eligibility. Please see the section below, “Reviewing Subsequent ISIR Transactions and Resolving Conflicting Information,” for more information. This waiver begins July 13, 2021, and applies for the remainder of the 2021-2022 FAFSA processing and verification cycle.

**Policy Owner:** Daniel McIlhenny, Executive Director of Financial Aid

**Approved by:**

Jeffery L. Osgood., Jr. Ph.D.

Deputy Provost and Vice President of Academic Operations

July 21, 2021

**Effective Dates:** Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022 Academic Terms Only