

Verification Policies and Procedures (for selected students)

Verification is the process of confirming the accuracy of data reported on your FAFSA.

Beginning in the 2012-13 academic year, this process was simplified with the addition of the Data Retrieval Tool on the FAFSA. Use of the Data Retrieval Tool allows IRS information to be directly downloaded into the FAFSA and is the preferred method of providing your information for the verification process. Two weeks after a tax return is filed, a student may log into their FAFSA and select and submit the Data Retrieval Tool as a correction to their FAFSA

Selection

Approximately 30% of all FAFSA filers are selected for verification by the federal government in a given academic year. Samford may also select certain FAFSA filers in addition to the government selection if there is reason to suspect that the FAFSA information is inaccurate. If a student is selected for verification, Samford is required to ask for certain information in order to verify items reported on the FAFSA. **For the selected filers, the verification process must be completed before the student can receive any federal need-based financial aid.**

Notification

Students will receive notice that they have been selected for verification through the federal government on their **Student Aid Report (SAR)** which is sent to them as a result of filing the FAFSA. Samford will also notify students through a **Missing Information Letter (MIL)** that will be sent to the student's Samford email address and will direct them to their Samford portal for the required forms. Students will also receive a **Verification Postcard** through the mail reminding them of their selection and their responsibility to provide the documentation. These will be sent on a monthly basis until August of the upcoming award year. Additionally, information will be requested through email and mail when any verification documentation is sent in by the student but is still incomplete.

Documentation

The basic requirement for verification is completion of the **Verification Form** and use of the data retrieval tool on the FAFSA or submission of the **Tax Return Transcript**. (Specifics are outlined below). **Please be aware that the Department of Education no longer allows schools to use signed copies of the tax forms as proof of income and taxes paid.** If selected for verification, students will be required to use the data retrieval tool or supply their tax return transcript from the previous year. They must request the tax return transcript from the IRS at www.irs.gov or 800-908-9946. In certain cases, a student may not be eligible to use the data retrieval tool. Even though the data retrieval tool is the preferred method, these filers will have to obtain their tax return transcript, having it sent to their home address. (Make sure to

request the tax return transcript and not the tax account transcript. There is a difference and the tax account transcript is unacceptable.) Once the student receives their tax return transcript, they should keep a copy and forward a copy to Samford via mail, email or fax.

Dependent Student Requirements: If a student is dependent as defined by the federal government for financial aid purposes, they will complete the **Dependent Verification Worksheet**. Student and parent should jointly complete this form making sure that all information is complete. Both parent and student must sign the form.

Secondly, if the student and the parent(s) are tax filers, they should select the data retrieval tool or supply a signed copy of their **tax return transcript** as described above. If either student and/or parent did not file a federal tax return in the previous year and they are not required to file, they should supply copies of their **W-2 forms for each employer**. If the student and/or parent is a non-tax filer, they should also list all employers and amounts earned in previous year in the space provided on the Verification Form.

Independent Student Requirements: If a student is independent as defined by the federal government for financial aid purposes, they will complete the **Independent Verification Worksheet**. The student (and student's spouse, if married) should jointly complete this form making sure that all information is complete and the form is signed by both student and spouse, if married.

Secondly, if the student and spouse (if married) is a tax filer, they should select the data retrieval tool or supply a signed copy of their **tax return transcript** as described above. If either student or spouse did not file a federal tax return in the previous year and is not required to file, they should supply copies of their **W-2 forms**. For all non-tax-filers, they should list all employers and amounts earned in the previous year in the space provided on the Verification Form.

Tax Extensions: If the student, the student's spouse or the student's parent are filing an extension to file their federal income tax return, please submit the following: a) a copy of the Application for Automatic Extension of Time To File U.S. Individual Income Tax Return (IRS form 4868), b) a copy of IRS Form W-2 for each source of employment income received for the previous tax year or, c) a signed statement by a self-employed person certifying the amount of the AGI and the income tax paid for the previous year.

The above documentation is the foundation of what Samford will need in order to verify a student's FAFSA information. It is possible that further information will be required as we review and will be requested through the student's Samford email address or home address.

Deadlines for Verification Documentation

Students should submit documentation as soon as they receive notice of their selection for verification. If all required documentation is not received at least 60 days prior to the start of the term the student plans to attend, there is no guarantee that funds will be in place by the time the semester begins.

Corrections

Corrections that have to be made by the Office of Financial Aid in the process of verification will be electronically submitted to CPS for processing. This will generate a corrected Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR) which is sent to Samford. CPS will also notify the student of the corrections. Corrections will also be communicated by Samford to the student through their award notification sent to their Samford email address and referring them to their updated award on their student portal.

Special Circumstances

Students who feel their FAFSA is not an accurate reflection of their financial situation due to certain special circumstances may request to have their FAFSA information reviewed for possible adjustment. In these cases, the student will submit a **Special Circumstances Request** with all supporting documentation outlined on the form. Students may be asked to complete the process of verification before a special circumstances review can be completed.

Helpful Tips for Completing Verification

- Submit the required information as soon as possible.
- Use the Data Retrieval Tool on the FAFSA, if eligible.
- If you choose not to use the Data Retrieval Tool, request your tax return transcript from the IRS at www.irs.gov or 800-908-9946. Keep a copy of the transcript and send one to Samford, signed, with the student ID written at the top.
- Complete the Verification Form carefully and in its entirety, leaving no blanks but inserting "0" if there is no figure to insert. Make sure all signatures are included on the form.
- If you are required to submit W-2 forms, make sure to include one for every job where income was earned in the previous year.
- Make sure to call our office and check on any submitted verification information if you do not hear from us within two weeks after the submission.