

Financial Aid: Frequently Asked Questions

Indian Hills Community College

Q. How do I apply for Financial Aid?

A. There are two ways to apply for financial aid: 1) File it electronically over the Internet (called FAFSA) at www.fafsa.ed.gov. This can take two to four weeks to process. Be sure to read all the instructions; or 2) Fill out a paper FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) and mail it in. This can take four to six weeks to process.

Q. How do I sign my FAFSA?

A. If you use FAFSA on the web you may either use your assigned PIN number as your signature (and your parent, if dependent) or print out a signature page just prior to submitting your electronic application. Make sure that all the signatures are properly submitted or the processing center will not be able to complete your financial aid results. If you use a paper FAFSA you (and your parent, if dependent) must sign the application.

Q. What am I applying for?

A. By submitting your FAFSA to the processing center you will be considered for federal and state financial aid. The types of aid programs include: Grants - funds that are not paid back; Work Study - employment, usually on-campus, where you a paycheck bi-monthly; and Loans - low interest loans usually repaid after leaving college. Some scholarships are also based on the FAFSA results but usually require their own application and process.

Q. Do I need to apply for admission before I apply for financial aid?

A. No. but you will need to be admitted before we are able to finalize your award.

Q. I don't live with my parents or my parents don't claim me on their tax returns. Do I still need to use their information on the FAFSA?

A. Yes. It does not matter if you live with them or not. If you do not meet the federal definition of an Independent Student, you are required to supply parent information on the FAFSA. Read the FAFSA instructions about dependency and who is considered a parent carefully.

Q. Should I include my step-parent's information on the FAFSA?

A. If the person who is considered the parent on the FAFSA is remarried at the time of the FAFSA filing, answer the FAFSA questions about this parent and the person whom your parent married (your step-parent).

Q. I am separated/divorced from my spouse now. How do I file for financial aid?

A. You do not include your spouse's income or other information on the FAFSA. If you and your spouse filed a joint federal tax return and you need help in completing FAFSA, bring in your federal tax return to the Enrollment Services office, along with your W-2s, and we can help you fill out or correct your FAFSA.

Q. My ex-spouse has custody of our children, but I pay child support. Can I include my children on the application?

A. You may include the children as part of your household on the FAFSA only if you provide more than 50 percent of the child's support. You may be required to provide documented proof of this. In most cases, if the children do not live with the student, they are not able to include the children on the FAFSA.

Q. My spouse/parent passed away during the tax year required on the FAFSA. Do I include that income on the application?

A. No. If the person has passed away, you do not provide that income information on the FAFSA.

Q. I am getting married in the near future. Can I say I'm married on the FAFSA?

A. No. You must report your marital status as of the time you fill out the application and it may not be changed. It is sometimes an advantage for a student to wait until being married to file the FAFSA since the student would be independent, but each case is different.

Q. I can't find my tax returns. What can I do?

A. You can call the I.R.S. and request a copy of your tax account information. Call (800) 829-1040.

Q. I am dependent per the FAFSA instructions and my parents won't provide financial information on the FAFSA. What should I do?

A. You might want to inform them that these are federal regulations and parent information is used only to determine your aid eligibility. They would not be responsible for any loans you incur as the loans would be in your name. However, if you have a dysfunctional relationship with your parents that can be supported by third-party documentation such as a counselor, teacher, or clergy, an exception to the federal regulation may be made. If so, please contact us about a special circumstance - dependency override appeal.

Q. Why do I have to answer question 35 about drug convictions?

A. Under federal law, some students who have drug-related convictions may be ineligible for federal student aid. For help on answering question 35 on the FAFSA, please call 1-800-433-3243 or go to www.fafsa.ed.gov for guidance.

Q. Do I have to apply for financial aid each year?

A. Yes. An award year is Fall, Winter, Spring and Summer terms, in that order. All students must apply for financial aid for each award year.

Q. When should I apply for financial aid?

A. You may not apply before January 1 prior to the upcoming award year. However, it is suggested to complete your federal tax returns (1040, etc.) as early as possible and then immediately complete the FAFSA. Some financial aid programs are limited in funding, thus are awarded on a first-come-first-served basis.

Q. I was selected by the processing center to have my FAFSA information verified. What does “verification” mean?

A. If you were selected for verification, we are required to obtain certain documentation before we can complete your award. We will be requesting a signed copy of your, and your parent if dependent, federal tax return (1040, etc.). We do not need your state and city income tax returns. We will also need a Federal Verification Worksheet completed which will be mailed to you. Additional documents will be requested that are needed to complete the student’s file.

Q. I’m currently in default on my student loans. Can I get financial aid?

A. If you are in default on a federal student loan, you are not eligible for any federal or state financial aid. You must make six consecutive payments on a defaulted loan and make satisfactory payment arrangements with the Department of Education to regain eligibility for aid. You must present the Financial Aid office with official notification from the Department of Education that you are no longer in default to receive aid.

Q. How will I find out about what financial aid I qualify for?

A. After we receive your FAFSA results from the processing center, collect all required documents, and correct any discrepancies we will send you an eligibility letter. The letter will list the types and amounts of financial aid that you qualify for.

Q. What do I do with my Eligibility Letter and Direct Loan promissory note?

A. Be sure to read the entire letter and all enclosed inserts carefully and follow the instructions.

Q. What is Entrance Loan Counseling?

A. Entrance Loan Counseling is a federal requirement to assure that students understand the basics of taking out a Loan. If you are borrowing a Loan for the first time, you must complete this exercise before we can disburse your loan. Go to www.dlsonline.com, click on the Loan Entrance Counseling link.

Q. Can I charge books from the bookstore to my tuition and fees bill?

A. Yes, if you have if you are registered for the current term.

Q. What do I do about my financial aid and my tuition and fees bill?

A. Please understand that you are responsible for paying your bill by the due date listed on the bill regardless if you eligible for financial assistance or not. In other words, all students must pay their bill by their bill due date. Failure to do so may result in you being removed from your current term classes.

Q. How does my financial aid get credited to my tuition and fees bill?

A. Funds are divided by three terms for the academic year and disbursed 30 days into each term. After your bill is paid in full, any excess funds each term will be refunded to you.

Q. Do I have to attend class to get my financial aid disbursements?

A. Yes! Faculty submit attendance information to us before we disburse the aid. If you are not attending, we may need to reduce your aid amount or hold it until you are in good status in the class.

Q. What is the difference between subsidized and unsubsidized loans?

A. A subsidized loan is the type of loan where you make no payments while you are enrolled at least half-time in college. The interest and principal are deferred. An unsubsidized loan works the same way except you are responsible for paying the interest while enrolled in classes.

Q. How much Direct Loan money may I borrow?

A. If eligible, a student in the first year of their study may borrow \$2,625 and then \$3,500 when you become a sophomore. Since different majors have different lengths of study, the grade levels may also differ. Independent students may also borrow up to an additional \$4,000. If your program is less than three terms in length, the loan will be prorated. You must attend at least half-time to borrow.

Q. Do I have to reapply for financial aid if I transfer to another school during the award year?

A. You do not have to re-apply, but dollar amounts do not transfer from school to school. Check with the school you are transferring to about their process. If you are transferring to Indian Hills Community College get your Student Aid Report (SAR) and call 1-800-433-3243. They will ask you a few questions and then send your FAFSA results to us. Our college codes are Centerville - 001849, Ottumwa - 008298.

Q. I lost my job, I am cutting my hours at work so I can attend school, or I am working a different job and making less money. How does this affect my aid?

A. The Financial Aid Office has a special consideration form for students to fill out when there is a dramatic change in income. It can have a significant affect in the amount of aid a student receives. Please contact our office for more information. Special consideration forms will be available 30 days after the beginning of Fall Term.