

# Comparison of the 2020-21 FAFSA and TASFA

This is a learning resource comparing the paper FAFSA in step order with the paper TASFA for equivalent sections. For a detailed comparison, please see the additional side-by-side document.

Topic	FAFSA	TASFA	Comparison Highlights
Acronym	Free Application for Federal Student Aid	Texas Application for State Financial Aid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA uses the term “free” in its name to ensure the applicant is aware that there is no cost associated with applying. While the TASFA is also “free,” the word <i>free</i> is not included in the name in order to avoid confusion with the federal form.</li> </ul>
Format	Application is available through a universal online webform or fillable pdf form.	Application is available through a fillable pdf form.  <b>Note:</b> A few institutions have an online TASFA option for students that is unique to the institution.	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The two colors in the FAFSA and TASFA help users navigate through the form by designating parent and student sections; historically, the TASFA aligns its color scheme with that of the FAFSA to assist administrators who are more familiar with the federal form but are also advising students with the TASFA.</li> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA have a notes section at the end of the form to clarify certain questions and to lessen the amount of text within the application.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA provides details about the application process at the beginning of the form; therefore, the questions start on page 3 for the FAFSA and page 1 for the TASFA.</li> <li>While both forms are fillable, the FAFSA uses individual boxes and bubbles, and the TASFA has blank spaces and clickable box options.</li> </ul>			
Purpose	The FAFSA is an application used by current and prospective students living in the United States or internationally to apply for most federal, state, and institutional financial aid.	The TASFA is an application used by institutions of higher education in the state of Texas to collect information to help determine eligibility for state (or institutional) financial aid for individuals that are <b>not qualified</b> to apply using the FAFSA. It is used for current and prospective students.	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA are intended to be a single source to apply for financial aid opportunities versus completing a unique application for each potential institution.</li> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA provide grants, loans, scholarships, and work-study options for eligible students to help cover educational costs; some options are dependent on a student’s financial need.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA determines an applicant’s eligibility for federal, state, and institutional aid, while the TASFA can <b>only</b> determine eligibility for relevant state/institutional aid. Those completing a TASFA are ineligible for the federal Title IV program.</li> <li>The TASFA encourages applicants who meet FAFSA filing requirements to submit a completed FAFSA. Financial aid applicants do <b>not</b> need to submit both the FAFSA and TASFA.</li> </ul>			

Topic	FAFSA	TASFA	Comparison Highlights
Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applicant completes the online or paper/fillable pdf FAFSA.</li> <li>2. Information is processed through the Central Processing System (CPS).</li> <li>3. A Student Aid Report (SAR) is generated for the applicant.</li> <li>4. An Institutional Student Information Report (ISIR) is sent to the institutions designated on the application.</li> <li>5. The institution uses the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) to determine federal, state, and institutional financial aid opportunities.</li> <li>6. Institution notifies the applicant based on its specific business process.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Applicant completes a paper/fillable pdf TASFA.</li> <li>2. Applicant emails or mails the individual form to the institution(s) that he or she plans to attend.</li> <li>3. The institution reviews the TASFA and collects other documentation to determine eligibility, as needed.</li> <li>4. The institution manually calculates the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) based on the application and documentation provided.</li> <li>5. The institution uses the student's EFC to determine state and institutional financial aid opportunities.</li> <li>6. Institution notifies the applicant based on its specific business process.</li> </ol>	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FAFSA and TASFA collect similar information needed to determine the student's Expected Family Contribution (EFC) using the federal methodology (FM).</li> <li>• The FAFSA and TASFA provide the priority deadline date for the state of Texas.</li> <li>• The FAFSA and TASFA recommend that students contact their designated higher education institutions if they have further questions on student financial aid options.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The FAFSA is processed through the federal Central Processing System (CPS) to confirm eligibility and calculate EFC.</li> <li>• The TASFA is processed manually by each institution to confirm eligibility and calculate EFC.</li> <li>• The student can designate up to four institutions on the paper FAFSA or up to 10 institutions on the online FAFSA. The paper TASFA can be sent to only one institution at a time, so the TASFA encourages the student to save or make copies of the filled-out form if he or she is planning to send the TASFA to more than one institution.</li> </ul>

The following pages compare each step of the FAFSA to the equivalent section of the TASFA.

Topic	FAFSA	TASFA	Comparison Highlights
Student Personal Information	Step 1: Student	Section One: Student Information	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Similar</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most questions on student personal information are written and asked on the FAFSA and TASFA in equivalent language.</li> <li>• The FAFSA and TASFA explain and ask about Selective Service Status.</li> <li>• The FAFSA and TASFA use equivalent language/questions about student academic status toward degrees that help the institution make grade-level determinations and other aid-related decisions.</li> </ul>
			<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Different</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The TASFA does not give the option of listing a country other than the United States for the student’s address since the form is intended for Texas residents. The FAFSA has directions for an applicant who is from one of the Freely Associated States.</li> <li>• The FAFSA asks for an SSN and a state driver’s license number to confirm identity. While the TASFA does allow for an SSN, it also allows for a college ID number, if applicable, to help verify identity for those who do not have an SSN or do not wish to report it.</li> <li>• The FAFSA asks how long parents and students have resided in a state to assist the institution with state residency. The TASFA intends that all applicants are residents of Texas but are ineligible to complete a FAFSA.</li> <li>• The FAFSA asks the applicant whether he or she has been convicted for the possession or sale of illegal drugs for an offense that occurred <b>while receiving</b> federal student aid, while the TASFA asks the applicant whether he or she <b>has ever been convicted</b> of a felony or crime involving a controlled substance. To receive certain state aid funds, FAFSA and TASFA applicants <b>must</b> certify directly through the institution that they meet the state’s drug conviction eligibility requirements.</li> <li>• The FAFSA does not ask intended enrollment credit hours; the TASFA does so to identify potential state aid recipients more easily.</li> </ul>

Topic	FAFSA	TASFA	Comparison Highlights
Citizenship and Legal Status	Step 1: Student	Section One: Student Information	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant's legal status typically determines what financial aid is available and which application he or she must complete.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA requires answering citizenship status or eligible noncitizen status. If the applicant does not have a Social Security Number (SSN) or is not eligible in his/her noncitizen status, the FAFSA cannot determine eligible federal or state aid.</li> <li>The TASFA does not require citizenship status and gives options for filling in the Deferred Action of Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status or putting N/A for SSN. The applicant does not need an SSN or to be a U.S. citizen to potentially qualify for state aid; but typically, the applicant must be a resident of the state of Texas.</li> <li>The TASFA clarifies work-study eligibility in DACA cases.</li> </ul>			
Student Financial Information	Step 2: Student	Section Four: Income Information	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA ask questions about student and/or spouse income, savings, investments, expenses, and gains.</li> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA ask questions about federal and state social service programs that the student or family use.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unlike the FAFSA, the TASFA does not ask about student or parental Adjusted Gross Income (AGI), or student or parental income tax; this information is typically collected by each individual institution, based on their internal procedure to verify income.</li> <li>The FAFSA asks the student several specific questions regarding untaxed or other income received or paid that are not likely to be relevant to a TASFA candidate, such as AmeriCorps and armed service/veteran-related items.</li> <li>The FAFSA discourages inputting an Individual Tax ID Number (ITIN) on the form to avoid confusion with a student's SSN, whereas the TASFA asks for an ITIN, if applicable.</li> </ul>			
Student Dependency Status	Step 3: Student	Section Two: Student Dependency Status Determination	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All questions on student dependency determination are the same between the FAFSA and TASFA except for a question related to the armed forces on the TASFA.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA has specific student and parent steps, while the TASFA uses thematic sections, one being a separate dependency status determination.</li> </ul>			

Topic	FAFSA	TASFA	Comparison Highlights
Parent Information	Step 4: Parent	Section Three: Parent Information Section Four: Income Information Section Five: Household Information	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equivalent questions are used in the parent personal information on the FAFSA and TASFA.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA groups most parental questions separate from student questions, where the TASFA groups student and parent personal information, income, and household information thematically.</li> <li>The FAFSA allows entering of zeros in the case that the parent does not have a social security number. The TASFA allows the selection of N/A.</li> <li>The FAFSA asks the parent(s) several specific questions regarding untaxed or other income received or paid that are not likely to be relevant to a TASFA candidate's parent, such as AmeriCorps and armed service/veteran-related items.</li> </ul>			
Student Household If Independent	Step 5: Student	Section Five: Household Information	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA have options to skip parental information depending on specific answers.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA uses separate sections for the parent and independent student household information. The TASFA uses the same section for all applicable household information.</li> </ul>			
School and Housing Choices	Step 6: Student	N/A	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA recommend keeping a copy for records.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA allows the applicant to add ten institutions on the online application and up to four institutions on the paper application for ISIR distribution purposes. The TASFA asks the applicant to send separate completed and signed copies to each preferred institution.</li> <li>The TASFA includes housing status in an earlier part of the application, and the FAFSA includes housing status in a box under the selecting schools section.</li> </ul>			
Signatures	Step 7: Student and Parent	Section Six: Signature(s)	<b>Similar</b>
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA require dated signatures.</li> <li>The FAFSA and TASFA require one parent to sign, if applicable.</li> </ul>
			<b>Different</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The TASFA does not request information if a preparer was paid or assisted with the completion of the application as it does on the FAFSA.</li> </ul>			