

Completing the 2020-21 FAFSA Correctly the First Time!

You will be completing a FAFSA for each school year that you attend BGU.

Getting Started

File Your 2018 Tax Returns

FAFSA now requires tax return information from 2 years prior to the year for which you are applying; **not** the most recent year. So, the 2020-21 FAFSA requires 2018 tax return information. For 2021-22 you will need to submit 2019 tax return information and so forth.

FAFSA Website: fafsa.ed.gov

Make Sure Your Parent(s) Are Available To Provide Their Info (it will take about an hour to complete)

Unless you meet the criteria for being “independent” (further explained on the next page), you AND your parents will need to be involved in the FAFSA process. Refer to the links below for more info:

- FAFSA Help page: <https://fafsa.ed.gov/help.htm>
- FAFSA and FSA ID Tips for Parents Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fz9j-g1FIHQ>
- Who’s My Parent When I Fill Out My FAFSA:
<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/who-is-my-parent.png>

Set up Your FSA ID

1. You will each need to set up your own individual FSA ID

Each person with access to your FAFSA, must have their own unique user name, email address and Federal Student Aid ID (FSA ID). Different individuals cannot share one FSA ID, and no unique user information is to be passed on to others.

Each unique user FSA ID is considered a legally binding signature.

The “Key” is a shorter password, which can be shared by multiple users to access the same FAFSA, but it is not used as a signature. Only the FSA ID can be used in this way.

2. While setting up your accounts **WRITE ALL INFORMATION DOWN** for every account! Do this, even if you auto save your log in information. You will be completing the FAFSA every year, so you will need this log in information year after year.

If someone has forgotten their FSA ID or any other log in information, it can be retrieved by clicking on the Forgot Username/Password links. There are additional helpful links for recovering information on the HELP link at the top of the FAFSA website.

Enter Accurate Information

Select BGU as a receiving school: our school code is 042278

Be sure to select the correct award year: 2020-21

Tip: Reduce the possibility of being selected for verification by the Department of Education by making sure all information you enter is accurate and that the information you have entered on the FAFSA matches the information you enter on the VFAO online student interview (see last page of this document for more info on this).

Your Personal Information

You would be amazed at how many students do not enter their birthdate, spelling of their name or their social security number correctly. Even a one-digit error will trigger a flag in your processing, requiring you to submit multiple pieces of information verifying your information and comparing it to past information you have submitted.

Make sure that both you and your parents enter completely accurate information!

Tax/Financial Information

Likewise, be aware of errors on things like your W2 forms and other tax documents, which will conflict with the information you fill out on your FAFSA and also trigger a flag and delay your processing. Get these corrected before attempting to complete the FAFSA, if you are aware of them already.

Tip: As soon as you realize you have made a mistake on your FAFSA, correct it. Doing so can reduce the possibility of your being selected for verification.

Determine if you are a Dependent or Independent

Undergraduate students who are under age 24 as of December 31 of the award year are considered to be dependent for federal student aid purposes unless they are married, have dependents other than a spouse, are an orphan, are a veteran or active duty member of the US Armed Forces, or satisfy other very limited criteria.

If you are under age 24 but think you may qualify to be independent, you can go through the FAFSA Dependency Worksheet to find out: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/sites/default/files/dependency-status.png>

Take note of whether you are considered “dependent” or “independent” according to your FAFSA. This will help you to know the amount of loans you qualify.

Provide Your Financial and Tax Information

1. **You must select the answer that describes your tax filing status for 2018: “Already completed”; “Will File”; or “Not going to file”.** Manually input your tax info from your 2018 tax returns. If you indicate on the FAFSA that you “Will file” a 2018 tax return and your 2018 income is similar to your 2017 income, use your 2017 income tax return to provide estimates for questions about your income. If your income is not similar, click Income Estimator for assistance estimating your adjusted gross income, and answer the remaining questions about your income to the best of your ability.

Once you file, you must correct your FAFSA, changing 1) your filing status from “Will file” to “Already completed,” and 2) your estimated answers to the final amounts on your 2018 tax return.

2. **If you are dependent, financial information from your parent(s), as well as yourself is collected in the FAFSA.** Further info about situations where parent info is not available can be viewed here: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/fafsa/filling-out/parent-info>
3. **If you are independent, financial information for you (and your spouse, if you are married) is collected in the FAFSA.**

IRS Data Retrieval Tool

The IRS Data Retrieval Tool is an option on the FAFSA, which automatically transfers tax return information from the IRS to the FAFSA. **We recommend that you use this to save time and effort!**

Signing the FAFSA (last page) - Don't miss this step!

You and your parent(s) will be entering electronic signatures on the last page of your FAFSA. **Do this by simply entering your FSA IDs as your legal signatures.**

Remember to use the correct FSA ID for the correct signature (student FSA ID for the student; parent FSA ID for the parent).

Your Expected Family Contribution (EFC)

In the course of completing your FAFSA, an EFC will be automatically calculated based on the information you have provided.

Tip: Take note of your EFC!

You will need this figure to complete the Virtual Financial Aid Office online student interview (Step 2 of the Financial Aid application process).

After Submitting Your FAFSA

Student Aid Report

The U.S. Department of Education will process your FAFSA within 3-5 days. Once your application is processed, you will receive an email containing a copy of your Student Aid Report (SAR), which summarizes the

information you provided on your FAFSA. Review your SAR and make sure all of the information is complete and accurate.

If there is any missing or incorrect information, log back into your FAFSA and complete or correct it as soon as possible.

Your SAR will include your Expected Family Contribution (EFC). The EFC determines your eligibility for a Federal Pell Grant, and BGU uses the EFC to assess your eligibility for other federal and nonfederal student aid.

Tip: If you see an asterisk next to the EFC on your SAR, your FAFSA has been selected for verification. You will receive email instructions for completing verification after you complete Step Two – the VFAO online student interview (see below)

Step Two – VFAO Interview

Now that you have completed the FAFSA you are ready to log in to the BGU Virtual Financial Aid Office (VFAO) to complete your online student interview. The student interview is an electronic survey-format document which walks you through the actual costs of attending BGU. It also gives you the opportunity to choose if you want student loans.

Just like the FAFSA, you will be completing the VFAO student interview each school year. The interview typically opens later than the FAFSA. When the interview has opened, you will receive an email with log in information for setting up your VFAO account and detailed instructions for completing the interview.