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Required electronic processes and related system requirements

Posted on 09-14-2004

September 2004

GEN-04-08

Subject: Required electronic processes and related system requirements.

Summary: This letter informs schools of the electronic processes in which they must participate and the updated system requirements needed to conduct these processes.

Dear Partner:

On September 14, 2004 we published a notice in the [Federal Register](#) designating the electronic processes that schools must participate in to be considered administratively capable under the regulations at 34 CFR 668.16(o). That notice also included minimum and optimal system (desktop PC and communications) requirements needed by schools to participate in the required electronic processes. We have included, as an attachment to this letter, a link to the [Federal Register](#) Notice from our IFAP website.

The enclosures to this letter summarize the required electronic processes (Enclosure A) and the system requirements (Enclosure B) that were included in the [Federal Register](#) Notice. In addition, answers to frequently asked questions about the system requirements are provided in Enclosure C of this letter.

We want to emphasize that a new required electronic process is that, beginning with the 2005-2006 award year, all schools must send and receive origination and disbursement data for the Federal Pell Grant Program and the Federal Direct Loan Program to the Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) system using the Extensible Markup Language (XML) "Common Record: COD." This requirement applies to all schools, including COD phase-in participants that currently submit and receive information using flat-file record formats.

We thank you for your continuing cooperation and partnership in using technology to more efficiently administer the FSA Programs. Please refer to the last page of the [Federal Register](#) Notice for contact information in the event you have questions on the information included in the Notice and in this letter.

Sincerely,

Kay Jacks
General Manager
Federal Student Aid

Attachment: [Federal Register Notice Link](#)

Enclosure A: Designated Electronic Processes

Enclosure B: System Requirements

Enclosure C: Frequently Asked Questions

Attachments/Enclosures:

[GEN-04-08 and Enclosures A, B, and C in Microsoft Word Format, 43KB, 5 pages](#)

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GEN-04-08 – Enclosure A: Required Electronic Processes

To be in compliance the administrative capability requirements of 34 CFR 668.16(o), a school must:

1. Participate in the Student Aid Internet Gateway (SAIG);
2. Use our electronic process whenever it is required to submit or update its Application for Approval to Participate in the Federal Student Aid Programs (for example, when the institution initially applies to participate, when it is recertified, or when it reports required changes, or seeks to be reinstated);
3. Use our electronic processes to submit its Fiscal Operations Report and Application to Participate (FISAP) and other required reports or requests for the campus-based programs (Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Work-Study, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant);
4. Electronically receive Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) from our Central Processing System (CPS) using the Student Aid Information Gateway (SAIG);
5. Use the Student Aid Information Gateway (SAIG) and approved electronic processes when submitting a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on behalf of an applicant for Federal student aid to our Central Processing System (CPS) or when submitting corrections or updates to FAFSA data to CPS for an applicant;
6. If not already listed, add itself to the Central Processing System (CPS) record for a student it wishes to consider for Title IV assistance;
7. Have on-line Internet access to the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) and submit to NSLDS its Federal Perkins Loan data, its student enrollment records, its Title IV program overpayments, and its NSLDS Transfer Monitoring records using either the offered Student Aid Information Gateway (SAIG) services or the Internet, as appropriate;
8. Access the “Information for Financial Aid Professionals” (IFAP) website;
9. Electronically submit its annual compliance and financial statement audits, and any other required audits;
10. Receive its draft and official cohort default rate data electronically; and
11. Beginning with the 2005-2006 award year, send and receive origination and disbursement data for the Federal Pell Grant Program and the Federal Direct Loan Program to the COD system using the Student Aid Information Gateway (SAIG) and the Extensible Markup Language (XML) “Common Record: COD” that complies with the published schema for each award year.

GEN-04-08 – Enclosure B: System Requirements

System Configurations

	Minimum Configuration	Optimal Configuration
IBM or Fully IBM-compatible PC	1.2 GHz Processor	2.8 GHz/333 MHz Processor
	512 MB RAM	1 GB RAM
	60 GB Hard Drive	80 GB Hard Drive
	48x CD-ROM Drive (CD-RW recommended)	48x CD-ROM Drive (CD-RW recommended)
	Windows compatible keyboard and mouse	Windows compatible keyboard and mouse
Monitor and Video Card	Capable of Super Video Graphics Adapter (SVGA) resolution (800x600) or higher	Capable of Super Video Graphics Adapter (SVGA) resolution (800x600) or higher
Internet Connection	56 Kbps Modem (meets or is upgradeable to V.90 standard)	High speed Internet connection (i.e., DSL)
Printer	Laser printer capable of printing on standard paper (8.5" x 11")	Laser printer capable of printing on standard paper (8.5" x 11")
Operating System	Windows 2000 or Windows XP Professional recommended (FSA will support Windows 98/98SE/ME only until June 30, 2006.)	Windows 2000 or Windows XP Professional recommended (FSA will support Windows 98/98SE/ME only until June 30, 2006.)

Although all of the designated electronic processes can be performed using the minimum configuration, we strongly recommend the optimal configuration, particularly in cases where a school sends or receives 4,000 or more records in an XML document (batch). This is because the new XML file formats used by EExpress and COD (and in the future by CPS) are larger and require greater storage and computing power. For the same reason, we would encourage a school to consider moving away from "Dial-up" and instead use a high-speed Internet connection. Doing so will significantly reduce both transmission time and transmission interruptions.

GEN-04-08 – Enclosure C: Frequently Asked Questions

Q1 Must all of my school's desktop computers (PCs) meet the updated minimum or optimal system configuration requirements?

A1 No. The updated system configuration requirements apply only to desktop computers on which your school will run EDEExpress and/or EDconnect.

Q2 How does my school determine which system configuration requirements to follow?

A2 The determination of which updated system configuration requirements to follow should be based on the number of Extensible Markup Language (XML) transactions your school will process. Although all of the electronic processes included in the Federal Register notice can be performed using the minimum configuration, we strongly recommend the optimal configuration if your school will send (transmit) and receive 4,000 or more records in an XML document (batch). This recommendation is based on the fact that XML file formats require greater storage and computing power.

Note: Currently, XML file formats are used by EDEExpress and the Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) System. In the future, XML file formats will be used by the Central Processing System (CPS) as well.

Q3 Should my school consider student population and database size when determining the system configuration that is right for us?

A3 Yes. The greater the size of your school's student population or Title IV applicant pool, the larger your software database or databases will be. Accordingly, there will be increased workload and processing demands on your system. While the updated minimum system configuration requirements would be sufficient, your school may require a more robust, augmented system to process records as efficiently as possible.

For assistance in determining the system configuration that is right for your school, consult with your IT Department or with hardware/software manufacturers and retailers. These experts will be able to analyze the functionality, capacity, performance, interoperability, maintainability, upgradeability, and size/weight/power/mobility of the core elements of the system keeping in mind your school's workload and business processes.

Q4 Should my school consider using a high-speed Internet connection instead of a dial-up connection?

A4 Yes, if your school will send large amounts of data. Although a high-speed Internet connection is only included in the optimal system configuration requirements, we encourage schools that will send and receive large amounts of data to consider moving away from a dial-up connection. Using a high-speed Internet connection will significantly reduce the time needed to transmit XML files and will increase the probability of an uninterrupted transmission session.

Q5 Why are the recommended operating systems Windows 2000 and Windows XP Professional but not Windows 98/98SE/ME?

A5 Windows 2000 and Windows XP Professional are more efficient and stable than the older Windows 98/98SE/ME operating systems. While Windows 98/98SE/ME are not recommended, FSA will continue to support these operating systems until June 30, 2006 provided Microsoft continues to support them. Refer to the installation guides for EDEExpress and/or EDconnect for information about recommended Network Operating Systems with Network Installations as well as any potential conflicts with specific systems.

Q6 When does FSA anticipate the next update to system configuration requirements?

A6 We do not anticipate needing to update system configuration requirements again for a few years. However, given changing advancements in technology, the review of system configuration requirements is an important ongoing activity.

Q7 Can my school use an Apple MacIntosh to run EDEExpress?

A7 No. As reflected in the updated system configuration requirements, your school can use only an IBM or IBM-compatible PC to run EDEExpress. PC emulators are problematic for the use of EDEExpress.

Q8 My school would like to use the computer that runs EDEExpress and/or EDconnect to run other applications. Will this interfere with EDEExpress and/or EDconnect?

A8 Your school can have other applications loaded on the same computer that runs EDEExpress and/or EDconnect. However, these other applications should be closed prior to running EDEExpress and/or EDconnect. Additionally, to ensure that the computer is running at its optimal performance and that it meets your school's hard drive space needs, you should periodically check the disk space availability and clean out old software applications and files. Refer to the installation guides for EDEExpress and EDconnect for additional information.

Q9 Who can my school contact with additional questions about EDconnect or EDEExpress?

A9 You may contact CPS/SAIG Technical Support with questions about with EDconnect or EDEExpress. They can be reached by phone at 1-(800) 330-5947 Monday through Friday between the hours of 8:00 AM and 8:00 PM Eastern Time. Or you can email them a question at CPSSAIG@ed.gov.