



Navigating FAFSA and RDS to Prepare for College

Both FAFSA and RDS are required to be eligible for financial aid and need similar information for completion. Below is a breakdown of these two items and the information needed to complete them.

FAFSA - Complete the **FAFSA** (*Free Application for Federal Student Aid*) to determine your eligibility for federal, state, and institutional financial aid.

RDS - Use **RDS** (*Residency Determination Service*) to receive an **RCN** (*Residency Certification Number*) to determine your eligibility for in-state tuition and state grant awards.

		
What?	Possible eligibility for federal, state, and institutional financial aid for college	Possible eligibility for in-state tuition and state grants
Where?	fafsa.gov	ncresidency.org (powered by CFNC.org)
First Step?	Get FSA ID (<i>Federal Student Aid Identification</i>) – student and parent/ legal guardian	If you have an account on CFNC.org, use your CFNC username and password to sign into RDS.
When?	FSA ID before Oct. 1; FAFSA as soon as possible after Oct. 1	Ideally before student applies to NC colleges and universities
	INFORMATION REQUIRED	INFORMATION REQUIRED
Student's Personal Identifying Information (SSN, ARN, USCIS or TIN)*	YES	YES
Parent's Personal Identifying Information (SSN, ARN, USCIS or TIN)*	YES	YES
Student-filed Federal Taxes	YES	YES
Parent/Legal Guardian-filed Federal Taxes	YES	YES
Student-filed State Taxes	NO	YES
Parent/Legal Guardian-filed State Taxes	NO	YES
Address of Permanent Residence	YES , for state grant eligibility	YES , for in-state tuition and state grant eligibility
Driver's License or Vehicle Information (if available)	YES	YES
Military Information (if applicable)	YES	YES
US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) Documentation (if applicable)	NO	YES
What to Save After Completing Form?	FSA ID and Student Aid Report (SAR) which will be sent via email	RCN - (Residency Certification Number) Retain it for later use.
Apply Again?	YES. Use FSA ID to complete the FAFSA each year in college.	NO. RCN never changes, but you may need to reapply if you transfer to a different institution.

*SSN = Social Security Number; ARN = Alien Registration Number; USCIS = US Citizenship and Immigration Services; ITIN = Individual Taxpayer Identification Number