

California Student Aid Commission (CSAC)

Non-SSN GPA Q & A

Including related questions on the FAFSA Bridge and AB 131

1. When does the CSAC plan on implementing the Dream Act for Cal Grants?

The Dream Act (AB 131) for Cal Grant applicants will not be implemented until January 2013 for the 2013-14 academic year. Additional information on the process will be made available next year.

2. What is the Non-SSN GPA Submission process?

The CSAC non-SSN GPA submission process allows high schools, high school districts or private school central offices to submit Entitlement Cal Grant GPAs for students without including a Social Security number (SSN). Instead of the student's SSN, CSAC uses other demographic information with the Grade Point Average (GPA) to match with the student's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

3. Why was this system created?

GPAs received for the Entitlement Cal Grant application process must be matched with the student's FAFSA to allow selection of potentially eligible Cal Grant program participants. However, many schools and districts do not collect student SSNs, making the submission of GPAs and matching of FAFSAs more difficult. This includes future AB 131 students who may not have an SSN. By using additional demographic data other than the SSN, the CSAC can match GPAs with the FAFSA data and with the Dream Application data when the AB 131 application processing begins for the 2013-14 award year.

4. Who can submit Non-SSN GPAs?

Any California high school with WebGrants access may submit GPAs using the Non-SSN GPA method. If you don't have WebGrants access yet, we encourage you to complete the necessary forms to establish a WebGrants account.

5. How was the Non-SSN GPA project tested?

The CSAC began working with the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) staff during the 2010-11 academic year on data requirements for matching against the FAFSA. During the past year, CSAC staff and LAUSD staff tested all aspects of the system before successfully implementing it for the 2011-12 application year.

6. Why weren't other high schools included in the pilot program?

The CSAC receives the largest volume of paper GPAs from the LAUSD. The large amount of data for students from the 136 LAUSD high schools allowed a great variety of testing conditions, and working with the LAUSD as the pilot met all the desirable conditions for a thorough and accurate test. To maintain complete control over the testing, a single point of contact, in this case the LAUSD, was ideal. This facilitated clear communication as the details of the submission process were worked out.

7. How does the Non-SSN GPA work?

Along with the GPA, in the non-SSN data file, data other than the student's SSN is submitted. The data fields correspond to data the CSAC can obtain from the FAFSA which includes the student's full name, address and phone number, student's date of birth and e-mail address, as well as the parent's last name and e-mail address. From these, a score is determined which indicates the likelihood of a match. The higher the score, the more likely that the GPA and FAFSA match.

8. What if the records do not match a FAFSA?

Non-SSN GPA records might fail to match for two primary reasons:

1. The demographic data received with the GPA varied too much to match with any FAFSA.
2. There is no FAFSA data at all to which to match.

In the case of a non-match, the "Non-SSN GPA Unmatched Report" is produced and made available to the school in WebGrants.

9. What is the deadline for submission of Non-SSN GPA data?

The same March 2 filing deadline is in place for all GPA data regardless of delivery method. The earlier that any data is delivered is better so that any problems in submission or processing can be worked out and corrected, if necessary. Since GPAs for current high school seniors do not include senior year grades, we recommend schools attempt to deliver any GPAs to the CSAC before January. Using that time frame for delivery, GPA matches can be made as soon as FAFSA data is processed.

10. Does this affect FAFSA submission at all?

There is no connection between the federal FAFSA submission process and the California GPA submission process. Once both are filed, however, the CSAC will attempt to match the two records. The submission of a GPA is also separate from the submission of the California Dream Application.

11. Does current WebGrants functionality change?

All current WebGrants functionalities are still in place. The data file layout for GPAs with SSNs is the same as it has been. The data file layout for the non-SSN match is significantly different with more than three times as many data fields.

12. Can we submit paper GPAs without an SSN?

No. CSAC cannot manually match paper GPAs based on data fields other than a SSN. For the 2012-13 year, all paper GPAs must include the student's SSN.

For the much smaller number of students applying under AB 131, if a student completes the Dream Application, our plan is to provide the ability to print a pre-completed GPA form to take to their school for GPA certification. Despite this form, we will encourage schools to submit electronic GPAs.

13. How does the FAFSA Bridge relate to GPA submission?

When fully implemented, CSAC anticipates students using the FAFSA Bridge to be able to sign an on-line GPA form to authorize release of their GPA. Schools that opt-in to accepting this GPA release would agree to send the student's GPA within a given time frame.

Even without a GPA release, the ability to inform every student who files the FAFSA that a Cal Grant GPA is required for all undergraduate applicants is a significant achievement. We anticipate far fewer students being unaware that the Cal Grant program requires, in addition to the FAFSA, a school certified GPA.

14. How does the FAFSA Bridge relate to AB 131?

The California Dream Application for AB 131 is a separate application from the FAFSA. Therefore, there will not be a FAFSA Bridge for AB 131 Dream Applicants. All students completing the Dream Application will be notified that there is an undergraduate GPA requirement for Cal Grant program participation.

15. Is the Non-SSN submission method only for AB 131 Dream Applicants?

No. The Non-SSN GPA submission method is for all students. Since some Dream Applicants do not have a SSN, this method will be the most efficient for that student population.

November 16, 2011