

SUMMARY

As a result of a Presidential Executive Order issued on January 20, 2025, the U.S. Department of Education has updated Question 11 on the 2025–26 FAFSA. Effective February 14, 2025, the gender question now offers only two response options: “Male” and “Female.” Previously available options—“Non-binary” and “Prefer not to answer”—have been removed.

The University of California knows this change may be frustrating or concerning for some of our LGBTQ+ students, especially those who are trans, nonbinary, and gender-diverse.

Below are some key points and frequently asked questions to help you through the process:

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)

1. Is the gender question on the FAFSA required?

Yes. A response is required to submit the FAFSA online. Gender information is collected for statistical purposes by the Department of Education and is not used to determine financial aid eligibility and is not shared with campuses.

2. Can I skip this question on the online FAFSA?

No. The online form requires you to select either “Male” or “Female” to complete your application.

3. What if I leave this question blank on the paper FAFSA?

According to federal guidance, paper applications submitted after February 14, 2025, will still be processed even if Question 11 is left blank. However, to avoid any processing delays, we recommend answering all required questions to the best of your ability.

4. Will changing my gender response from year-to-year trigger verification or affect my aid?

No. Gender is not used to calculate aid and is not part of the verification process.

5. Does my FSA ID ask for gender, and does it have to match what I select on the FAFSA?

The FSA ID creation process does not include a gender field. There is no requirement for any gender-related information to match between the FAFSA and FSA ID.

6. Do I need to use my legal name on the FAFSA?

Yes. Students are required to use the name that matches their records with the Social Security Administration to prevent delays.

7. I submitted my FAFSA before February 14, 2025, and selected “Non-binary” or “Prefer not to answer.” What happens now?

No action is required. Your application will remain valid and processed as submitted.

8. What if I or a financial aid officer makes a correction to a previously submitted FAFSA?

- If you make a correction to your FAFSA submitted before February 14, 2025, you will be required to update your response to Question 11 using the new gender options.
- If a campus makes a correction on your behalf, they will not be required to update your gender response.

9. Where do the data about my gender identity and legal name from the FAFSA reside?

- As stated above, your answer to Question 11 on the FAFSA is not shared with colleges and universities.
- The University Registrars maintain the gender identity, lived and legal names that you have provided through other means.
- Federal and state law, as well as University policy, protects student privacy and grants you the right to access to your own educational record. If you have questions about privacy, review your campus Registrar's privacy statement.

The University understands that this change may feel limiting or invalidating to members of our trans and nonbinary communities. Please know that your identity is valid, even if federal systems do not reflect your lived experience.

If you need help completing your FAFSA or want to talk through how this may affect you, contact the campus LGBTQ+ Resource Center or the Financial Aid Office.