

## FAFSA Usability Assessment

### General

Problem	Resolution	Development Estimate
<p><b>Section Page Format</b>            Each FAFSA section contains several sets of questions, which are separated by non-optimal white space. For example, Section/Step One contains 7 or 8 sets of questions and the sets are separated by a large number of blank lines. The page format is potentially confusing to the user.</p>	<p>Tighten organization of the pages. Combine section/step questions and eliminate white space. Less frequent display of the navigation bar would be good. A more extensive solution would be to break up the section into pages, which would require more effort than the estimate shown.</p>	<p>40-60 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Eliminate white space by tightening the organization of each section.</li> <li>➤ Modify JavaScript to handle removal of navigation buttons where needed.</li> </ul> <p>Estimate includes change to all sections.</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Top) & General**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<p><b>Navigation Button Functionality</b> Unclear functionality of navigation buttons at the bottom of each page.</p>	<p>Group navigation buttons differently and/or provide instructions. For example, place navigation such as Previous and Next on the left side of the page and all variable buttons to the right with spacing in between the sets of buttons.</p>	<p>8-16 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ 8 hours to create the instructions and insert content onto the appropriate pages and/or</li> <li>➤ 8 hours to group the buttons differently.</li> </ul> <p>Both will require modification to all sections. Estimate includes change to all sections.</p>
<p><b>Navigation Button Layout</b> The layout of the navigation buttons at the bottom of the page could easily lead to user errors. For example, the commonly used Next button is positioned right next to the Clear form (and lose inputs!) button.</p>	<p>Re-space buttons. For example, place navigation such as Previous and Next on the left side of the page and all variable buttons to the right with spacing in between both sets of buttons.</p>	<p>8 hours</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Re-space buttons for all sections to eliminate possible confusion.</li> </ul> <p>Estimate includes change to all sections.</p>

Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Top) & General (Continued)

Problem	Resolution	Development Estimate
<p><b>Save Function</b> Users are unaware of how to use the save function. It is unclear whether a user must save each section before continuing on to the next page or they must submit through a single save action at the end.</p>	<p>Provide save function details on a general instruction page at the beginning of the application, between the select form type function and the application. The instructions should be short, simple, and in non-paragraph form.</p>	<p>4 hours ➤ Define text and insert content onto new instruction page.</p>
<p><b>Browser Navigation Toolbar</b> Users are asked not to use the browser navigation toolbar while navigating through the FAFSA form. Unfortunately end users typically make use of browser toolbars on a regular basis and they often use the toolbar before reviewing the list of FAFSA Don'ts. Clicking on the Back key when running FAFSA will lose all data entered by the user if he/she hasn't saved.</p>	<p>➤ Provide list FAFSA Don'ts on a general instruction page at the beginning of the application, between the select form type function and the application. ➤ Modify select form type page to open a new window when a user selects to fill out a form. Customize the window by removing the browser navigation buttons and drop down. <b>NOTE:</b> Loss of data due to clicking on the back key can be avoided by saving the data on the server as the user navigates through the site, which is one of recommendations mentioned in the MADDOG report.</p>	<p>4-8 hours ➤ 4 hours of usability to define copy then insert it onto the new instruction page. ➤ 4 hours to develop new window feature.</p>
<p><b>Drug Worksheet Module</b> Grouping of information on the application is not always intuitive or in logical order. Currently the user completes part of the application before finding out that a drug conviction can make him/her ineligible for financial aid.</p>	<p>Provide drug restriction details on a general instruction page at the beginning of the application, between the select form type function and the application. A more extensive solution would be to redesign the Drug Module, which would require more effort than the estimate shown.</p>	<p>4 hours ➤ Define instructional content and insert onto new instruction page.</p>
<p><b>Help</b> Help information is too extensive.</p>	<p>Extensive Help pages are not always intuitive. Reword and reorganize the help pages. A more extensive solution would be to redesign the Help Module or redesign the application so that Help isn't needed as much, neither is included in the estimate shown.</p>	<p>See field level help under the You're the Student, Part I</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step 1: You the Student, Part I)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<p><b>Field Level Help</b> The use of help link labels can be potentially confusing to the user since tabbing occurs across labels as well as text boxes.</p>	<p>Remove the text link labels and provide a high level Help section for each section of the form, rather than field level help. A more extensive solution would be to redesign the Help Module or redesign the application so that Help isn't needed as much, neither is included in the estimate shown.</p>	<p>40 hours ➤ Define new help instructions for each section, then modify code to remove text link labels and include new section level help link. Estimate includes change to all sections.</p>
<p><b>SSN and Phone Number Format</b> Required input format is unclear. No punctuation is allowed as input. What about international phone numbers? Field length appears to allow US numbers only.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Provide sample formats next to textboxes, (i.e. 123-45-6789) or (i.e. 336.456.6789). This should assist with preventing users from using an invalid format.</li> <li>➤ Allow logical punctuation to be entered.</li> </ul>	<p>16 hours ➤ Identify all fields to be modified. Insert phone number and SSN format instructions, then modify edit checks to handle punctuation. Estimate includes change to all sections necessary.</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step 1: You the Student, Part 2)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<p><b>Date Format</b> Date format for Date of Birth is unclear. Not advisable to require date of birth entry in this format (06081985).</p>	<p>Use another more standard or cleared format for DOB entry (e.g. 07Jun1980, 06/07/1980)</p>	<p>6 hours ➤ Insert date of birth format instruction, then modify code to allow for punctuation. Estimate includes change to all sections necessary.</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step Six: Student's School Information)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<p><b>Help</b>                      Help information appear to be provided on the initial page. Somewhat inconsistent with how help is provided (field level) elsewhere. The instructions indicate that actions may be performed on this page, when user must advance to the next page instead.</p>	<p>Make these instructions more succinct and group them with the information to which they relate. A more extensive solution would be to redesign the Help Module or redesign the application so that Help isn't needed as much, neither is included in the estimate shown.</p>	<p>3 hours                      ➤ Define new text, then update the page.</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step Six: Student's School Information, Questions 88-91, 92-95, 96-99)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<p><b>Search Function</b>                      The Search function for Universities and Colleges is not intuitive and very confusing. Instructions are unclear and the format for entry of a school name (no punctuation or spaces) is not typical.</p>	<p>Provide better instructions. A more extensive solution would be to redesign the School Search Module to provide clearer functionality, which isn't included in the estimate shown.</p>	<p>4 hours                      ➤ Define instruction content and possibly modify search to allow for punctuation and spaces.</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step Seven?: No Title)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<p><b>Final Check</b>                      When the user clicks on the Final Check button, the test changes to Processing. It isn't a good idea to put processing messages on buttons.</p>	<p>Indicate processing some other way than through a button. Deactivate the button if necessary to prevent multiple Final Check presses.</p>	<p>3 hours                      ➤ Modify code to display processing message on page instead of on button.</p>
<p><b>Save Function</b>                      The Save process is very confusing. User should not be required to change the default file extension.</p>	<p>Provide better instructions. Do not require user to enter htm file extension and do not provide a cgi extension as the default.</p>	<p>Currently getting fixed.</p>
<p><b>Button Format</b>                      The buttons, while still 5, change at the bottom of the page. If the user becomes accustomed to the location of the Help button, they will be looking for it in the same place here. This could lead to errors.</p>	<p>Reconsider buttons and their navigation to address the consistency issues.</p>	<p>1 hour                      ➤ Reorganize navigation to make it consistent with other pages.</p>

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step 1: Printing a Copy of FAFSA on the Web Application)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<b>Button Format</b> The buttons change at the bottom of the page again from the previous page. The Save and Next buttons are inconsistently placed, as compared to previous pages.	Revisit button layout and make them consistent.	1 hour ➤ Reorganize navigation to make it consistent with other pages.

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step 2: Saving The Signature Process, Continued)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<b>Instructions</b> The process is unclear.	Include more succinct instructions and combine the two pages. A more extensive solution would be to redesign the Signature Module, which isn't included in the estimate shown.	4 hours ➤ Define instructions and insert them on the page, then combine pages if possible.

**Page: 2000-2001 FAFSA Application Form (Step 3: Submitting your FAFSA on the Web Application)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Resolution</b>	<b>Development Estimate</b>
<b>Instructions</b> The instructions are somewhat confusing. It is not clear to the user that they have submitted an application.	Refine instructions. Make it more obvious that the user is at the end and is submitting (graphic?).	3 hours ➤ Define textual changes then modify page.
<b>Confirmation</b> Submission confirmation is not clear to the users.	Create a clear, distinct confirmation message.	3 hours ➤ Define textual changes then modify page.

**Assumptions:**

- Estimates do not include time for requirements gathering, usability review, and testing.
- Each estimate provided is for the online application only. Estimates do not include the time it will take to change Renewal or Corrections.