

**FAQ Document for Rhode Island Alternative Application  
for State Postsecondary Student Financial Assistance (2020-2021)**

**Questions & Answers:**

**1. What is the difference between the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the Rhode Island Alternative Application for State Postsecondary Student Financial Assistance (2020-2021)?**

Although both the FAFSA and the RI Alternative Financial Aid application are similar in format, the FAFSA is used to apply for state and federal financial aid, and the RI Alternative Financial Aid is used to apply only for state financial aid.

**a. You should complete the FAFSA if you have:**

- A social security number because you're either a:
  - i. U.S. Citizen **or**
  - ii. An eligible non-citizen, by the definition provided by FAFSA
- If you're either of the above, please fill out your FAFSA at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov)

**b. You should complete the RI Alternative Financial Aid Application if you:**

- Do not meet the FAFSA definitions above (Part A), cannot apply for federal student financial aid due to immigration status, and meet the conditions described in PART 1 of the application.

**2. If I'm undocumented, am I eligible for state financial aid or federal financial aid?**

**a. State Financial Aid:**

- Yes. The RI Alternative Financial Aid Application allows eligible students who cannot fill out the FAFSA an opportunity to apply for state financial aid regardless of their immigration status. Students who complete the alternative application will be eligible for state funds at public institutions.

**b. Federal financial aid:**

- No. In order to fill out the FAFSA and be eligible for federal aid you must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen

**3. Does this application work for all higher education institutions in RI?**

No. This application is only available for the state's public institutions: URI, RIC, and CCRI.

**4. If I have DACA, can I still apply for the RI Alternative Financial Aid?**

Yes. Although DACA recipients have a social security number, they are not eligible for federal financial aid, making them eligible for the RI Alternative Financial Aid application.

**5. How can I apply for the RI Alternative Financial Aid as an undocumented student?**

The Alternative Financial Aid Form is currently available in paper form. You can request an application from the Office of Postsecondary Commissioner, by emailing [aidapplication@riopc.edu](mailto:aidapplication@riopc.edu).

**6. Is the RI Alternative Financial Aid Application the same as RI Promise?**

No. The RI Promise is a different program that follows a different application process than the Alternative Financial Aid Application. Students who are interested in the RI Promise should contact CCRI for more information.

**7. Do I have to complete the affidavit to qualify for RI Alternative Financial Aid application?**

Yes. You must agree to all statements displayed on the affidavit to prove the following

- (1) You live in Rhode Island
- (2) You have attended a RI high school for at least three years and that you have graduated from a RI high school (or have obtained a Graduate Equivalency Diploma (GED))
- (3) You have filed for I.S. immigration status (or will do as soon as you're eligible)
- (4) That you (or if you're a minor, your parents) are not in the United States as a non-immigrant alien

**8. What is a non-immigrant alien?**

The term "non-immigrant alien" refers to a classification in the U.S. Immigration Code that identifies certain individuals (such as employees of foreign embassies or corporations and their families) who are in the United States temporarily on a special U.S. visa for professional purposes or to fill a specialized job that otherwise cannot be filled by a U.S. citizen. Please visit <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/glossary/nonimmigrant> for more information.

**9. What if my parents have not filed a tax return?**

If your parents did not file a 2018 tax return, they should provide a non-filing letter from the IRS, and/or make sure to complete the financial information sections on the application.

**10. I'm over 18, why am I still considered dependent in my RI Alternative Financial Aid form?**

Filling out Part 3 of the RI Alternative Financial Aid Application will determine your dependency status based on your answers. One of the questions that makes a determination asks whether you're over the age of 24. Under this application, students up to the age of 24 are still considered dependent and require your parent's information to complete this application, unless you are eligible and answer 'yes' to any other Part 3 questions.

**11. When is the deadline to submit?**

Deadlines to submit Alternative Financial Aid Application depend on each institution's financial aid deadline.

- a. **CCRI:** Applications for financial aid are available beginning October 1st, 2019; rolling deadline until July 1<sup>st</sup>. For more information please visit: <https://www.ccri.edu/oes/fa/>
- b. **RIC:** Recommended deadline is February 1<sup>st</sup> (til June/July as of 2020) as priority deadline. Readmitted and New Transfer Students (Fall semester), deadline is up to April 15th. For more information please visit: <http://www.ric.edu/financialaid/Pages/Prospective-Undergraduates.aspx>
- c. **URI:** Recommended priority deadline is March 1st. For more information please visit: <https://web.uri.edu/enrollment/fa-application-information/>

**12. Do I have to submit an application every year?**

Yes. Just like the FAFSA, you must submit an Alternative Financial Aid Application every year.

**13. How do I know my application has been received?**

Once your application has been received you will be notified by email.

**14. What is the process to receive financial assistance through the RI Alternative Financial Aid form?**

- a. Apply for admission to the public university you would like to attend: CCRI, RIC, and/ or URI.
- b. Your institution(s) will determine student eligibility for resident tuition rates by completing an affidavit for in-state tuition.

- c. Complete a RI Alternative Aid Application in order for each institution to determine eligibility for state financial aid.

**15. How will I know if my application is incomplete?**

Once your application has been received and checked for completion at RIOPC, you will receive an email notification that your application has been forwarded to your institution. If your application is incomplete, RIOPC will notify you to provide additional needed documents.

**16. How do I notarize my application?**

A notary public is a person licensed by the government to perform acts in legal affair, like witnessing signatures on documents. In order for your application to be complete, a notary must witness you(r) (and your parent(s)' if applicable) signature. You may find a notary at your local library, bank, or at your institution. To find notaries available in your area you may refer to this link:

<http://business.sos.ri.gov/notarypublicsearch/>

**17. How do I know how much I will receive from my institution?**

Based on the financial aid information you've provided through the RI Alternative Financial Aid Application, each institution will process the application and provide the student with a financial aid decision.

**18. Does completing the RI Alternative Financial Aid Application for 2020-2021 mean a student is guaranteed state financial aid?**

No. The RI Alternative Financial Aid Application just gives students who are not able to complete the FAFSA eligibility to apply and receive financial aid. Financial aid programs have requirements all applicants must meet, such as demonstrating financial need. Students may be selected by their institution for a process called verification, which may require you or your parent(s) to submit additional financial information, in order to determine eligibility.

**19. Who can I contact if I have any more specific questions about filling out the application?**

You may contact the RI Office of Postsecondary Commissioner at [aidapplication@riopc.edu](mailto:aidapplication@riopc.edu) with any additional questions you may have.