

**Income Verification  
Process – Definitions &  
Privacy Policy**

**Definitions**

<b>Dependent Student</b>	When a parent/guardian claims the student as a dependent on their tax return and the parent’s/guardian’s income is reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), the student is a Dependent Student.
<b>Independent Student</b>	You are considered independent if you are: 1) 24 years of age by December 31 of award year; 2) Married and/or have legal dependents other than spouse; 3) A Veteran/Member of the U.S. Armed Forces; 4) An orphan, in foster care, or a ward of the court; 5) Prior to age 18, an emancipated minor or in legal guardianship as determined by a court; 6) As unaccompanied youth, homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless or; 7) are a student who the financial aid administrator has determined to be financially independent.
<b>Taxable Income</b>	Taxable income is the amount on a tax return, less any allowable deductions. This is the amount of your income that it is subject to income tax. This amount can be found on Line 15 of your 1040 Federal Tax Return.
<b>Dependents/Household Size</b>	The number of individuals who are reported as dependents on a tax return.

**Why we ask for this information**

As a federally-funded program, we are bound by federal regulations that require all McNair Scholars Programs to provide documentation that each student meets the eligibility requirements. Eligible students for the McNair Scholars Program are first-generation college students who are low-income and/or students who are members of groups historically underrepresented in graduate education (African American/Black, Hispanic/Latino, American Indian/Alaskan Native, or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander).

**At least two-thirds of the participants must meet [Federal Low-Income Guidelines](#); however, there are a small number of spaces for students who do not qualify as low-income.**

## **Privacy Policy**

The Sonoma State University McNair Scholars Program is dedicated to protecting our participants' personal information. Any information collected here will be stored securely and will never be shared with any individual or agency aside from the U.S. Department of Education for reporting purposes.

## **Questions?**

Still not sure if you are a Dependent or Independent Student? Please contact us at [mcnairscholars@sonoma.edu](mailto:mcnairscholars@sonoma.edu) so that we can assist you with this process.