GAfutures

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Frequently Asked Questions

Administrative Users

07/2021

GSFC | Georgia Student Finance Commission

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GENERAL INFORMATION FOR GAFUTURES.ORG

What is the official name of the website?
<u>GAfutures.org</u> - The website should be referred to as **GAfutures** with the letters "G" and "A" pronounced as letters not as "Georgia".

What type of browser should be utilized in accessing GAfutures.org? Mainly your common browser options from Microsoft, Google, Firefox, and Apple are compatible. Attempting to access GAfutures through other browsers may cause compatibility issues. When using a shared computer make sure you log completely out of your account before closing the browser.

Are the services provided on GAfutures free?
Yes. **GAfutures** and all of the information and services it provides are free. There are tools for career exploration, planning and applying to college, and increased information on how to pay for college available to users.

How is "designated staff" defined and access set up in GAfutures for each school?
"Designated staff" includes anyone with approved access to certain areas of information on **GAfutures**. Designated staff can include:

K-12 Administrators
- **District Administrator** – Set up by GSFC. The District Administrator has access to all system users and students for all schools within their district.
- **Institution Administrator** – (e.g. the top administrator at a given school) may be set up by the District Administrator or GSFC.
- **Institution User** – (counselors, teachers) are typically set up by the Institution Administrator at a given school.

Postsecondary Administrators
- **Institution Administrator** – (e.g. financial aid directors, admission directors) may be set up by a GSFC Administrator.
- **Institution User** – (academic affairs, student affairs) are typically set up by the Institution Administrator at a given school.

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FEATURES AND FUNCTIONS

What are some of the features and functions available on GAfutures?

- **GAfutures** has an engaging, user-friendly experience. **GAfutures** is well-organized and allows users to find relevant, up-to-date information quickly and easily.

- The *Create an Account* process is streamlined with a user-friendly design. The process consists of one to three screens and has less required information making account creation quicker, easier and faster.

- The single sign on capability allows authorized users to sign in to **GAfutures** only once and automatically have access to other systems including STARS and SURFER. No need for separate usernames and passwords.

- Usernames can be retrieved and passwords reset by the individual user in real time using the new *Forgot Username* and/or *Forgot Password functions.*

- Users can provide a secondary email address to retrieve their username and/or reset their password.

- Security questions are unique to different age groups to make them easier for users to remember.

- The account sharing function allows parents and legal guardians to view their student's account. It is easy and secure.

- **GAfutures'** has an easy- to- use advance search function, powered by Google.

- In addition to the advanced search functions, an easy-to-use Site Map is available to use on **GAfutures**. The Site Map aids as another option to help users navigate the website and find specific information.

- **GAfutures'** content is professionally written for its respective audiences, search engine optimized and meets required state and national education standards.

- For designated staff, the "Admin Mega Menu" is the centralized location for access to other systems (STARS, SURFER) and messages.

- For students and other site users, *My GAfutures* is the centralized location for messages and managing their account profile. *My Transcript* allows high school students to request their transcripts be sent to designated postsecondary institutions.

- For designated staff, the easy-to-use transcript exchange process is located in STARS and SURFER.

- With the launch of **GAfutures**, GSFC has expanded the transcript calculation cycles for the HOPE GPA. Transcripts are calculated for HOPE eligibility twice each business day at *11 a.m.* and ***after midnight***.

Can two or more accounts share the same email address?
Yes. The username must be unique, but the email address does not have to be unique. It is common for parents to use their own email address for their account as well as for the account of their younger children.

PASSWORDS, USERNAMES, AND DUPLICATE ACCOUNTS

What if a student forgets their username and/or password?

For convenience, **GAfutures** has a "*Forgot Username"* and a "*Forgot Password"* function on the sign in page.

Passwords can be reset by one of the following methods:
- Use *Forgot Password*
- *Help* Feature
- Answering previously chosen security questions
- Contacting designated staff (counselors and teachers) – an email with login assistance will be emailed to the email designated in student's profile.
- Contacting GSFC

Usernames can be retrieved by one of the following methods:
- Use *Forgot Username*
- *Help* Feature
- Contact a designated staff member with an administrative account (counselors, teachers) – look-up student username
- Contacting GSFC

The *Forgot Username* and *Forgot Password* functions should significantly reduce the number of duplicate accounts created.

Can designated staff retrieve and/or reset student username and passwords on GAfutures?

With *GAfutures*, designated staff (counselors, teachers) can:
- Retrieve individual usernames for users associated with their school
- Initiate *Password Reset* for users associated with their school – an email with temporary password will be sent to the student through the email listed in their **GAfutures** Profile.

Note: For security reasons, viewing, retrieving, or printing existing passwords is prohibited.

Does designated staff have the ability to mass reset passwords?

No. for security reasons, only students, authorized users (parents, legal guardians) and designated staff have the ability to reset individual passwords.

On GAfutures, can designated staff (counselors, teachers) look up student accounts to help prevent creating duplicate accounts?

Yes. Depending on the level of access, certain users can look up students on the school level, district level, or system-wide.
- Designated staff (counselors, teachers) can look up any student at their school.

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- District administrators can look up any student in their district.
- Designated staff can help students retrieve their own username and/or reset their own password through the *Forgot Username* and *Forgot Password* functions regardless of the school.
- GSFC can look up any student anywhere.

This wide variety of options should also significantly reduce the number of duplicate accounts created.

If a duplicate account is created, what can a designated staff member do so the duplicate account(s) do not reflect in their reports?
Designated staff can opt to 'hide' specified accounts so they are not reflected in **GAfutures** reporting. The 'hide' feature is available in the *Admin* menu *(Edit/Account Management)*.

ADMIN FUNCTIONS MENU AND ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Does GAfutures have a designated area for admins?
Yes, the Admin Functions Mega Menu is where designated staff will manage access for school administrators and those who need access to STARS/SURFER (Transcript Exchange will be a part of STARS/SURFER). Teachers can still use **GAfutures** in the classroom but will not have access to student accounts or profiles (including password reset functionality). Students will be responsible for their username and passwords and will be able to reset or retrieve their credentials.

Can designated staff print a list of students from GAfutures?
Yes. In the Admin Functions Menu, designated staff will be able to print lists of students with accounts on **GAfutures**.

How can student account information be retrieved for a student at my school?
Within **GAfutures**, there are several ways to look up student information.
• Designated staff (counselors, assigned teachers) can look up any student at their school.
• District Administrators can look up any student in their district.
• Designated staff can help students retrieve their own username and/or reset their own password via the *Forgot Username* and *Forgot Password functions* regardless of school.
• GSFC can look up any student.

Can designated staff (counselors, teachers) see students new to their school that may have created an account somewhere else?
If the student's account has *not yet been updated* to reflect the new school:
• Designated staff (counselors, teachers) from the previous school can look up any student at their school.
• District Administrators associated with the previous school can look up any student in their district.
• Designated staff can help students retrieve their own username and/or reset their own password via the *Forgot Username* and *Forgot Password* functions regardless of school.
• GSFC can look up any student anywhere.

If the student's account has *already been updated* to show the new school:
• Designated staff (counselors, teachers) from the new school can look up any student at their school.
• District Administrators associated with the new school can look up any student in their district.

If a student is associated with a school, but no longer attends that school, and the designated staff does not know what school the student now attends, can that student be removed or deleted from the original school?

No. The student's record cannot be deleted but designated staff can 'hide' any student from reports or groups without associating them with another school. By hiding the student's account, the student's information (saved activities) will not reflect in the school's reporting.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FOR HIGH SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

How do I find documents that will assist me with the Transcript Exchange Process?

- Quick Guides are available in STARS>Documentation>Quick Guides
- GAfutures>Resources>GAfutures Training/FAQs/Quick Guides>Quick Guides - Administrators

What are the due dates for the HOPE GPA calculation?

- Preliminary Reporting and Verification is due on February 15
- Final Reporting and Verification is due on June 30
- Underclass Reporting is at least once a year by June 30

What happens if I do not verify my student's final HOPE GPA calculation?

- The student and the postsecondary institution will not be able to access the student's HOPE GPA.

What are the three essential fields that have to be included in all transcripts for the Final HOPE GPA Calculation?

- Enrollment Status code of "G" for graduated
- Valid Graduation Date – Has to be today or in the past
- Valid Diploma Type – C(College Prep) or G(General)

Will the HOPE calculation be performed even if a high school senior does not meet the rigor requirements?

- Rigor requirements must be met in order to be considered for the HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarship. Visit the *HOPE & State Aid Programs* tab for eligibility requirements.

How do I receive access to STARS/SURFER?

- For District Admin access, contact GSFC @ TREX@GSFC.ORG
- For Institution Admin access, contact your District Admin (high school officials only)
- For Institution Admin access, contact GSFC @ TavisC@GSFC.ORG (postsecondary only)
- If you are an Institution Admin and your school does not have a District Admin, contact GSFC at TREX@GSFC.ORG
- For Institution User access, contact your Institution Admin or District Admin

Who is my District Admin? Who is my Institution Admin?

In most cases, the District Admin is the head/lead counselor of your district and the Institution

Admin is the head counselor or senior counselor for your school. If you are still having trouble locating your admin, use one of the following methods:
- Contact your GSFC Outreach Representative
- Submit a **GAfutures** *Help* request

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Will XAP continue to process applications?

Yes, this process is not changing. Students will be able to apply to college through GAfutures and colleges will continue to access applications through XAP in the Control Center**.**

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POSTSECONDARY AND TRAINING/PREPARATION

How will transcripts be received at colleges for admissions purposes?
With Transcript Exchange being handled solely by GSFC, transcripts can be retrieved and downloaded in SURFER. The Control Center will only be used to download applications for your school.

Are there any privacy restrictions for postsecondary institutions whose students are largely adults and over 18?
Yes. Postsecondary institution staff cannot look up any accounts (other than their own) as these users, in general, are legally adults.

Are there training resources available for GAfutures?
Resources are available on **GAfutures** (within the *Resources*) to assist users. There is a *Help* feature and questions can always be sent to **GAfutures@gsfc.org**.

How can customers receive more information or submit questions regarding GAfutures?
Questions about the website and requests to be added to the **GAfutures** email list to receive updates about the new site can be submitted to **GAfutures@gsfc.org**.

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Editing College Information

College Search Annual Update

College Search information on **GAfutures** is compiled by Petersons and updated annually, usually September 15. The update will override any information previously edited by institutions. Institutions should review their updated information for accuracy. In order to correct your institution's record in the Petersons database, submit any changes to Jeremy Serna at Jeremy.Serna@Petersons.com using the following format:

Subject line: GAfutures College Search (School Name)

In the body of the email: (The information you would like to update).

COLLEGE SEARCH FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

How does GAfutures collect data for the College Search?

Peterson's is the third party data source GSFC uses for the College and Scholarship search engine.

How does Peterson's collect their data?

Peterson's collects its data from participating colleges by survey via mail or web. Mail in surveys are sent to colleges and universities during the months of January– June. If there is no response, a second attempt is made via web survey.

How often is the information in the College Search updated?

GSFC receives one data transmission from Peterson's once per calendar year. GSFC usually will refresh all data in the College Search September 15; if this date falls on a weekend, the data refresh will take place the following Monday.

How can Admins update fields that cannot be edited using the Edit College feature?

Schools can submit the information to be updated to Peterson's directly to Jeremy.Serna@Petersons.com .