



Graduate  
Theological  
Union

**Financial Aid Office**

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## Federal Graduate PLUS Loan Borrowing Policy

The Graduate Theological Union participates in the William D. Ford Direct Loan programs. The Graduate PLUS Loan is a non-need based, low interest loan made to graduate and professional students making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) in a qualified degree program and must be enrolled at least-half time in order to maintain eligibility. Students may apply for the academic year; fall and spring, and must have borrowed up to the maximum limits in federal Unsubsidized Direct Loan eligibility. The maximum Grad PLUS loan limit that a student may borrow in an academic year is up to unmet cost of attendance, the difference between a student's standard cost of attendance and the sum of all financial aid assistance received. Understandably, Graduate PLUS loans increase overall loan indebtedness. Whenever possible, it is recommended that students review their budget to consider how they can reduce their reliance on loan funds through increased income, applying for external scholarships, adjustment of priorities, or reduced expenses.

Interest rates on federal student loans are determined by federal law and set by Congress. The interest rate varies by the type of loan and the date of the first disbursement. While federal student loans have a fixed interest rate for the life of the loan, interest rates may change beginning on July 1 each year. Under section 455(b)(7) of the Higher Education Act (HEA), interest rates on Federal Direct Loans are set according to a formula that is based upon an auction of 10-year Treasury Notes. Separate interest rates are established each year for Direct Unsubsidized and PLUS Loans for which the first disbursement is made on or after July 1 through the following June 30. Interest begins accruing from the date the loan is first disbursed, and includes periods of deferment or forbearance until it is repaid in full. If you do not pay the interest as it is charged, the Direct Loan Servicing Center will capitalize the interest, by adding it to the unpaid principal amount of your loan when repayment begins. Capitalization increases the unpaid principal balance of your loan, and interest will then be charged on the new, increased principal amount. You may opt to pay down any accrued interest while you are in school.

Additionally, a loan origination fee is charged against the total amount borrowed and is deducted from loan proceeds by the federal processor before each disbursement, so the net loan amount received will be less than the gross amount you have to repay. For more information with regard to the current interest rate and loan origination fee, please visit: <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/types/loans/plus>.

Federal regulations require credit checks with the US Department of Education for all graduate students seeking a federal Graduate PLUS loan. If your credit has been approved it remains valid for up to 180 days. A financial aid applicant is considered to have adverse credit history if they have one or more debts with a total combined outstanding balance greater than \$2,085 that is 90 days or more delinquent, or that has been placed in collection or charged off during the two years preceding the credit report, or has been determined to be in default, debts that have been discharged in bankruptcy, or has been the subject of foreclosure, repossession, tax lien, wage garnishment, or write off of any federal student aid debt within the last five years. Students will be notified by Direct Loans if their application is denied and will include the reason for denial and the name of the credit bureau from which the denial was obtained.

If you do not meet the credit requirements, you can still obtain the loan by:

- Appealing the credit decision at [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) by selecting "Appeal Credit Decision" on the main page or by calling Direct Loans at (800) 557-7394;
- Obtaining a credit worthy endorser to cosign on the Graduate PLUS loan application with you.

Please Note: If you request a PLUS loan for more than one loan period your credit record may be accessed more than one time by Department of Education.

Students with adverse credit history that obtain the loan through one of the two methods listed above are required to complete online **PLUS counseling** at [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) as mandated by federal law.

To reapply with an endorser (co-signer):

- The endorser must login to [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) using their own information (SSN and Department of Education FSA ID);
- Select the, “Complete an Endorser Addendum” link from the main page;
- Follow the instructions provided to complete the endorser process. The Loan/Award Identification Number was provided during your original credit check. If you do not have this information, you may contact the Federal Loan Origination Center at (800) 557-7394; and,
- The student borrower is required to complete a **new** PLUS Master Promissory Note (MPN) for Graduate/Professional Students at [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov).

**To request a federal Graduate PLUS Loan, you must complete the required steps listed below:**

1. Log into [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) and select the, “Apply for a PLUS Loan” link from the main page and complete the PLUS Loan Application. Typically, you should receive an email notification of your credit decision within minutes of completion. You may view your credit decision by selecting the “My Correspondence” link on the right navigation bar. If you have adverse credit history, you may appeal the credit decision or obtain an endorser. **NOTE:** If the USDE has determined an adverse credit decision, you must submit proof of completion of the online PLUS Counseling from [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov). Select, “Complete PLUS Credit Counseling” from the main menu.
2. First-time Grad PLUS loan borrowers at the GTU must complete Loan Entrance Counseling and the PLUS Master Promissory Note (MPN) for Graduate/Professional Students at [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov). To complete Loan Entrance Counseling, select the “Complete Loan Counseling (Entrance, Financial Awareness, Exit)” link from the main menu then select “Entrance Counseling (Required)”. To complete the MPN, select the “Complete Loan Agreement (Master Promissory Note)” link from the main menu then select “PLUS MPN for Graduate/Professional Students”. Please Note: If you have an active Direct PLUS MPN you may not be required to complete a new MPN. It is your responsibility to keep track of the expiration date of your MPN.
3. At [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) select the, “Repayment Estimator” link on the right navigation bar and email a copy of the *summary of your repayment information* to [finaid@gtu.edu](mailto:finaid@gtu.edu) by selecting the email icon at the bottom of the page.
4. Complete and submit the **2018-2019 Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Request** form. PLUS loan request forms that are incomplete will not be processed. The PLUS request may be submitted electronically to [finaid@gtu.edu](mailto:finaid@gtu.edu) with the subject line, “Grad PLUS Request.” Keep in mind that student loans are limited to your educational expenses and it is best to borrow only what is needed to cover your educational costs in order to minimize your overall student loan debt obligation.
5. When your Graduate PLUS loan eligibility has been determined by the Financial Aid Office, a revised award notification will be sent to your school email address. Once notified, you may review and accept or reject your PLUS loan by logging into your WebAdvisor account.

You have the right to decline or reduce the amount of a federal student loan. If the loan cancellation or reduction occurs within 120 days of the disbursement date, it is treated as a partial or full cancellation with the appropriate adjustment of loan fees and interest. In order for the Financial Aid Office to return funds on your behalf, a written request must be received no later than ten (10) business days prior to the 120-day regulatory timeframe. After 120 days, there is no adjustment to fees nor interest accrued, and you, the student, must return the funds directly to your assigned loan servicer. Please note that if you have already received a loan credit refund, you must return all or a portion of the refund to the Business Office.

By federal law, student loans are to be used exclusively for educational purposes for the student only. Allowable costs include tuition, room and board, books, health insurance, and transportation costs. Like the unsubsidized loan, PLUS loans typically disburse in two, equal installments; one at the beginning of the fall and spring semesters and will be applied toward payment of tuition, room and board (if applicable), and all education-related school charges, first. If you have a remaining credit balance after tuition and fees are assessed, a loan credit refund is issued to the student borrower by the Business Office via paper check or direct deposit, if you have opted in via your WebAdvisor account.

You will receive a Federal Direct Loan Disclosure Statement from the DL Servicing Center, up to thirty calendar days before the first anticipated disbursement. It identifies the loan type, anticipated disbursement amounts and dates, anticipated net disbursement amounts, loan fee and other important information regarding your loan. The federal government requires all federal student aid borrowers to participate in loan exit counseling prior to taking a leave of absence, withdrawing, graduating or enrolling less than half-time so that you will know your rights and responsibilities. During exit counseling, you will be given information with regard to deferment and forbearance options and will inform you of your repayment options. Failure to complete this requirement will result in a hold being placed on further registration, or release of transcripts and/or diploma.

Repayment of the Federal Direct Loan begins six months after a student graduates or ceases to be enrolled at least half-time. Borrowers typically have between 10 and 25 years to repay federal loans, dependent upon which repayment plan you choose. The Direct Loan Servicing Center will notify you when your first payment is due. If you do not choose a payment plan, the US Department of Education will automatically place you in the Standard Repayment Plan, with fixed monthly payments for up to ten years. For additional information about the various repayment plans available, as well as, a repayment plan calculator, visit [www.studentloans.gov](http://www.studentloans.gov) or [www.studentaid.ed.gov](http://www.studentaid.ed.gov).

A deferment is a postponement of payment on a loan. If you are unable to make your scheduled loan payments but do not qualify for a deferment, you may be able to receive a forbearance. A forbearance allows you to make smaller payments, extend the time for making payments, or stop making payments your loan temporarily.

To access your complete federal student loan history and loan servicer information, log onto the National Student Loan Data System at [www.nslds.ed.gov](http://www.nslds.ed.gov). You will need your US Department of Education Federal Student Aid (FSA) ID, this is the same ID used to electronically sign FAFSA.

Students should notify the GTU Financial Aid Office if you:

- Take a leave of absence;
- Drop below half-time enrollment;
- Graduate;
- Withdraw;
- Transfer to another school; or,
- Have any other change in status that may affect your loan eligibility.

Student loan recipients must notify the Direct Loan Servicing Center if you:

- Change your address or telephone number;
- Change your name (for example, maiden to married name); and,
- Change employers, or if your employer's address or phone number changes.