



# DataScience@SMU Tuition, Billing and Financial Aid FAQs

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## Tuition and Billing

### **How much does the DataScience@SMU program cost?**

Tuition is based on the number of credits for which you register. Current tuition rates can be found on the [DataScience@SMU program site](#).

### **How much is the confirmation deposit, and when is it due?**

There is a \$500 non-refundable enrollment deposit due once admitted.

### **Can I use financial aid to cover the deposit?**

No, federal student aid cannot be used to pay the deposit.

### **Will I be able to view my award package before submitting the deposit?**

No. Students will need to pay their deposit before being reviewed for awarding.

### **When will I receive a tuition bill and when is payment due?**

Payment deadlines are listed on the [Bursar webpage](#).

### **How do I view my bill?**

Invoice and statement notifications are sent via email to each student's SMU email account.

## **What are the accepted forms of payment?**

- Electronic Check (Personal Checking or Savings) with no service charge
- Electronic Credit Card (American Express, Discover and MasterCard) with a non-refundable 2.75% service charge. VISA is now accepted for payments made to the Student Account for tuition and fees and for NelNet payment plans ONLY. A different payment profile that does not use VISA can be used for payments made to the Miscellaneous Account.
- Western Union has partnered with SMU for International Wire Payments and also Domestic Wires to help replace bank wires. Payments to the student account by selecting the Link in SMUpay and completing the process with Western Union. Save on bank fees and exchange rates. Western Union is worldwide.
- International Wires (SMU Flywire & Western Union) - You can make international wire payments to the student account by selecting the link in SMUpay and completing the process. Provide current Student ID for payment to be applied correctly.
- Domestic Wires (Western Union) - You can make domestic wire payments on your student account and save bank fees. By selecting the link in SMUpay and completing the process. Provide current Student ID for payment to be applied correctly.

For more information on payment options, please visit the [Bursar webpage](#).

## **How does my employer go about paying the school?**

Please visit the [Bursar's webpage](#) for more information.

## **Are payment plan options available for online students?**

Yes, there are 3 different types of payment plans: Annual payment plan, Payment plan by term, and Summer payment plans. Please contact the [Bursar's webpage](#) for more information.

## **What are the consequences if my tuition bill is not paid when classes begin?**

Contact the [SMU Bursar](#).

## **If I'm eligible to receive a refund, what is the process?**

Details on the refund process are listed on the [Bursar's webpage](#).

## **What is the Title IV Authorization to Credit the Account?**

By completing the Title IV Authorization, found in the my.SMU student portal, SMU can apply your federal aid to all your charges, such as medical insurance, parking fines and

other miscellaneous charges if the aid and charges post within the same timeframe before the account is refunded. If not, the student will be responsible for paying the billed charges.

### **Who can I contact at SMU for billing and payment questions?**

You may contact the [SMU Bursar](#) for all billing questions.

## **SMU Student Portal**

### **What is the SMU student portal?**

The SMU student portal is my.SMU. Your my.SMU account includes access to academic records, billing, financial aid, direct deposit set up, and more. You will need your SMU ID and password to log into my.SMU portal.

## **Financial Aid at SMU**

### **Does DataScience@SMU offer internal scholarships to online students?**

There are currently no internal scholarships for the DataScience program. Students are encouraged to research external scholarships to potentially assist with tuition.

### **Are there SMU specific supplemental financial aid forms I need to complete?**

SMU does not require any school specific supplemental forms. If you are a new student, and are planning to apply for federal student aid, you will need to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)), Entrance Counseling and the Loan Agreement Master Promissory Note (MPN) on the [Federal Student Aid website](#). Students may also pursue private alternative loans.

### **What federal student aid is available to graduate students?**

The federal student aid graduate students are eligible to apply for include the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan and the Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan. [Learn more about the types of federal student aid.](#)

### **Why are graduate students not eligible for the Federal Pell Grant or the Federal Subsidized Loan?**

The Department of Education awards Federal Pell Grants and Direct Subsidized Loans to eligible undergraduate students who demonstrate financial need and have not yet completed their bachelor's degrees. The Department of Education does not evaluate need or income for loans at the graduate or professional level. Therefore, graduate students are not eligible for either the Federal Pell Grant nor the Direct Subsidized Loan.

### **Are there academic requirements I must meet to receive federal student aid?**

Students must be maintaining Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) to continue receiving financial aid. Please view the [SAP requirements](#) for more information.

### **What is the minimum number of credits required to receive federal student aid?**

Students must be registered at 4.5 credits per term to receive federal aid.

### **How do I determine full-time, part-time, or half-time enrollment in this program?**

- Fall and Spring semesters: Students enrolled in at least 9 credits are considered full-time. Students enrolled in 4.5 credit hours are considered half-time.
- Summer semester: Students enrolled in at least 6 credits are considered full-time. Students enrolled in 4.5 credit hours are considered half-time.

### **What are private loans?**

Private education loans, also known as alternative loans which are credit-based and may require a co-signer, are offered by private lenders to help students bridge the gap between the cost of education and the amount the government allows you to borrow in federal loans. Lenders offer private educational loans with different rates, fees, repayment terms, and approval requirements.

### **Are private loans offered at SMU?**

No. However, SMU conducts a public, open request for information (RFI) and utilizes a neutral comparison tool called ELM Select to compile a list of private lenders offering educational loans. To view the list of lenders, available loans, options and terms, repayment benefits, and applications websites, please visit the [SMU Loans page](#).

### **When will I receive my financial aid award?**

Students generally receive their award letter 2-4 weeks prior to classes starting or TBD if the student is admitted late into the program.

### **How do I accept my financial aid award?**

You will need to log into the Financial Aid section of your my.SMU student portal to accept your award.

### **Am I required to accept the full amount that I am offered on my award letter?**

No, you do not have to accept the full amount offered. Students are encouraged to borrow only what is needed. You can choose to accept all, part or none of your financial aid award. For instructions on accepting, declining or reducing awards, visit the [Financial Aid webpage](#).

### **Does my Direct Loan eligibility cover the entire cost of the program?**

Assuming you are eligible for both the Direct Unsubsidized Loan and the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan, the aid will cover the current academic year you are enrolled in.

### **When will loans disburse to my student account?**

Federal student loans do not disburse earlier than 10 days prior to the start of classes.

### **Can I use loans to cover additional expenses such as living expenses, books, supplies, etc.?**

DataScience@SMU students are eligible to use loan funding to cover tuition, fees, books and up to \$5,000 for additional expenses per term enrolled.

### **Is there an immersion required for this program? If so, will I be able to use the loan funds to cover expenses?**

You may take a 1.5-credit immersion along with a 3-credit course to meet the federal student aid eligibility requirement of part-time status, which is 4.5 credits. Students who travel to immersions hosted in another state may be eligible for reimbursement of certain travel costs. Students submit a request for adjustment to cost of attendance using the "Graduate Student Estimated Monthly Expenses" form found on the financial aid website. Students must include proof of purchase for required immersion travel expenses, such as airfare. Students must be enrolled for the immersion, and additional aid for the immersion may not be awarded until the Budget Adjustment form is reviewed and approved. Visit [the Forms Library](#) for more information.

### **Who can I contact at SMU for financial aid questions?**

If you have any questions about tuition and financial aid at SMU, please contact Charmissa Ajakaiye by email [ajakaiye@mail.smu.edu](mailto:ajakaiye@mail.smu.edu) or [gradfinaid@mail.smu.edu](mailto:gradfinaid@mail.smu.edu).

## **Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)**

### **What is the FAFSA?**

The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) is an online application the Department of Education uses to determine if you are eligible to receive federal student aid.

### **What is the SMU FAFSA school code?**

The SMU FAFSA school code is 003613.

## **Do I need my parents' tax information to complete the FAFSA?**

If you are applying for graduate school, you are considered an independent student, and do not need to include your parents' information to complete the FAFSA.

## **What is the Expected Family Contribution (EFC)?**

The Expected Family Contribution (EFC) is a measurement of your ability to contribute toward your educational costs. As a graduate/professional student your EFC is not a factor in your eligibility for federal student loans.

## **When should I complete the FAFSA?**

The FAFSA is available every October 1st for the upcoming academic year.

New students planning to use federal student aid should complete a FAFSA while applying for admission. Continuing students will need to submit a FAFSA each year they plan to receive federal student aid.

Please reference the chart below to determine which FAFSA to complete based on your desired start date:

<b>Start</b>	<b>Term</b>	<b>FAFSA Year</b>
Sept 2020	Fall	2020–2021
Nov 2020	Winter	2020–2021
Jan 2021	Spring	2020–2021
May 2021	Summer	2020–2021

## **Do I need to complete the FAFSA each year?**

Yes. Because eligibility for federal student aid does not carry over from one award year to the next, you will need to complete the FAFSA for each award year for which you are or plan to be a student.

## **What constitutes an academic year for federal student aid?**

An academic year is the year for which financial aid is used to fund your education. Generally, this is the 12-month period that begins on August 1 of one year and ends on July 31 of the following year.

# Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan

## What is the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan?

The Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan is a federal loan offered to students to help with the cost of education. The Federal Unsubsidized Loan is not based on income or financial need.

## What criteria is used to determine eligibility for federal student aid?

The Direct Unsubsidized Loan is not based on income. In order to apply for federal student aid, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen
- Have a valid Social Security Number (SSN)
- Be registered with Selective Service, if you are male (must register between the ages of 18 and 25)
- Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in an eligible degree program
- Be enrolled at least half-time in an eligible program
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress
- Not currently be in default on previous student loans borrowed through FSA
- Not have exceeded the maximum aggregate loan limit

Learn more about [federal student aid eligibility criteria](#) on the Federal Student Aid website.

## What is the aggregate loan limit?

The aggregate loan limit is the total amount that you may borrow in federal student loans for undergraduate and graduate study. In addition to borrowing limitations based on the cost of attendance for the program, students are also limited in terms of lifetime borrowing. The maximum aggregate loan limit for federal loans is \$138,500. This amount does not include PLUS loans, nor private loans.

If the total loan amount you receive over the course of your education reaches the aggregate loan limit, you are not eligible to receive additional Federal Direct Unsubsidized loans. However, if you repay some of your loans to bring your outstanding loan debt below the aggregate loan limit, you could then borrow again, up to the amount of your remaining eligibility under the aggregate loan limit. You can learn more about [graduate annual loan limits](#) on the Federal Student Aid website.

## **How do I find out if I am near my aggregate loan limit or have defaulted on a federal student loan?**

Log in on the [StudentAid.gov homepage](https://studentaid.gov) to view your federal student loan borrowing history, and loan servicer details. Please note that private education loans are not listed on this site. Students in default are not eligible for additional federal loans. Contact your lender for default resolution options.

## **What is the difference between a Direct Unsubsidized Loan and a Direct Subsidized Loan?**

Direct Subsidized Loans are available to undergraduate students with financial need. The U.S. Department of Education pays the interest on subsidized loans while students are enrolled in their undergraduate program. The Direct Unsubsidized Loan is available to undergraduate and graduate students and does not require demonstration of financial need. The Unsubsidized Loan begins accruing interest as soon as funds are disbursed. [Learn more about the difference between unsubsidized and subsidized loans.](#)

## **How much am I eligible for with the Direct Unsubsidized Loan?**

Most graduate level students are potentially eligible to receive up to \$20,500 per academic year from the Direct Unsubsidized Loan. Learn more about [graduate annual loan limits](#).

## **How do I apply for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan?**

To apply for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan, you must complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA).

## **What is the current Direct Unsubsidized Loan interest rate?**

The Direct Unsubsidized Loan interest rate is determined on an annual basis. Learn more about [interest rates](#) on the Federal Student Aid website.

## **Are there any additional loan fees for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan?**

There is a loan origination fee that is a percentage of the total loan amount. The loan origination fee is deducted proportionately from each loan disbursement you receive. Information on Unsubsidized loan origination fees can be found on the [Interest Rates and Fees page](#) of the Federal Student Aid website.



# Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loan

## **What is the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

The Direct Graduate PLUS Loan is a federal loan that graduate or professional degree students can use to help pay education expenses in addition to the Direct Unsubsidized Loan. [Learn about Direct PLUS Loans.](#)

## **Do Direct PLUS Loans affect my aggregate loan limit?**

Only Direct Subsidized/Direct Unsubsidized Loans (formerly referred to as Stafford loans) and federal loans made through the Federal Family Education Loan (FFEL) Program count toward your aggregate loan limit.

## **What are the eligibility criteria to apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

A credit check will be conducted when applying for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan. In addition to the federal student aid eligibility criteria, applicants cannot have an adverse credit history.

## **What are the credit criteria to receive the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

One of the eligibility requirements to receive a Graduate PLUS Loan is that you must not have an [adverse credit history](#). A credit check is performed to determine whether a Graduate PLUS Loan applicant meets this requirement.

## **How much can I borrow from the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

If approved for the Grad PLUS Loan, you can borrow up to the cost of attendance as determined by SMU.

## **When do I apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

You can apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan within 180 days of the start of your program, or once you are enrolled.

## **How do I apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

In order to apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS loan, you must first complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Once you have completed the FAFSA, apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan by completing the credit application on the [Federal Student Aid website](#). Also complete the Graduate PLUS Loan Agreement Master Promissory Note (MPN).

## **What are the next steps if I'm approved for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

If approved, complete the Graduate PLUS Loan Agreement Master Promissory Note (MPN) on the [Federal Student Aid website](#).

## **What are my options if I'm denied the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

If you are denied the Graduate PLUS loan, you may reapply with an endorser or follow the instructions on the [Department of Education's website](#) to appeal the denial.

## **What is the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan current interest rate?**

The Direct Graduate PLUS Loan interest rate is determined at the beginning of each academic year, and is available on the Federal Student Aid website's [Interest Rates and Fees page](#).

## **Are there any additional loan fees for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?**

There is a loan origination fee that is a percentage of the total loan amount. The loan origination fee is deducted proportionately from each loan disbursement you receive. Information on Direct Graduate PLUS Loan origination fees can be found on the [Interest Rates and Fees page](#) of the Federal Student Aid website.

# **Loan Repayment**

## **Do I have to repay my student loans while I'm in school?**

You can defer payment on your federal student loans if you are enrolled at least half-time. You should be aware that although you can defer payments while you are in school, interest will still accrue on your loan(s).

The Unsubsidized Loan and Graduate Plus loan will enter into repayment six months after you graduate, fall below half-time status, take a leave of absence or withdraw from the program. Most private loans also have deferred payment options while you are in school; however, you will need to check with your loan servicer.

## **When do I have to repay my loan?**

After you graduate, leave school or drop below half-time enrollment, you will have a six-month grace period before you are required to begin repayment. During this period, you'll receive repayment information from your loan servicer, and you will be notified of your first payment due date. Payments are usually due monthly. You are not required to pay while in school, however if you choose to, there is no penalty to prepay. [Learn more about repayment timelines.](#)

## **What are the repayment plan options and how do I select one?**

The Department of Education (ED) offers multiple options for repayment. You may visit the ED website for more information on [loan repayment plans](#).

## **Is there a repayment calculator or estimator that I can use?**

Yes, visit the [ED website for repayment estimators](#).

## **Can I consolidate my graduate loans and my undergraduate loans?**

A Direct Consolidation Loan allows you to consolidate (combine) multiple federal education loans into one loan including both graduate and undergraduate loans. The result is a single monthly payment instead of multiple payments. Learn more about [loan consolidation](#).

## **Are there any loan forgiveness options available?**

In certain circumstances, all or a portion of a borrower's federal student loans may be forgiven under the federal government's loan forgiveness program. Please review the Department of Education website for more information on [federal loan forgiveness programs](#).

# **Military Education Benefits**

## **How do I apply for military education benefits?**

To begin the process of applying for eligible military education benefits, visit the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website](#). Questions regarding eligibility should be directed to the VA at 1-(888)-442-4551.

## **What documents are required to process military education benefits?**

Visit [VA.gov](#) to access and manage your VA education benefits. If you are applying for Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits, complete the [Education Benefits Application](#), which generates a request for a Certificate of Eligibility (COE). The COE is mailed to you within 6-8 weeks from submitting the application.

A copy of the COE must be provided to the SMU VA Certifying Official at the University Registrar's Office at [VABenefits@smu.edu](mailto:VABenefits@smu.edu). Additional documentation is required to be submitted to SMU prior to receiving your benefits. Please visit our "[Using Your Benefits at SMU webpage](#)" for all required documentation.

## **How often do I need to request recertification?**

Certification requests are sent out twice a year, in November and April. You will receive an email from [VABenefits@smu.edu](mailto:VABenefits@smu.edu) with instructions on how to request your certification.

## **Will my military benefits cover the entire cost of the program?**

Please visit the [GI Bill comparison tool](#) to view what your VA benefits will cover at SMU.

## **What are the eligibility factors for the Post-9/11 GI bill?**

You may be eligible if you served at least 90 days of aggregate service on or after September 10, 2001, or individuals discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. Servicemembers must serve at least 36 months on active duty to receive 100% of this benefit. Those with between 90 days to 35 months of active duty receive a prorated benefit based on active duty time. You must have received an honorable discharge to be eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill®. [Learn more about the Post-9/11 GI Bill.](#)

## **What does the Post-9/11 GI Bill® pay?**

- Up to VA's annual tuition cap for private institutions, plus additional Yellow Ribbon funding (if applicable).
- A monthly housing allowance.
- Up to \$1,000 a year for books/supplies.

## **How is the Post-9/11 GI Bill monthly housing allowance calculated at SMU?**

A monthly housing allowance is paid directly to the student at the beginning of each month for the previous month. MHA will only be paid while the student is not on active duty. The housing allowance is prorated by the student's Post-9/11 GI Bill percentage and the student's enrollment. Students must be enrolled over half-time to receive MHA.

## **What other military benefits does SMU accept aside from the Post-9/11 GI Bill?**

SMU accepts all chapters of VA education benefits and Tuition Assistance. A list of chapters can be found on our [SMU Veterans website](#).

## **What is the deadline to apply for VA education benefits?**

The deadline to submit paperwork to SMU is 30 days after the first day of the term. However, it is recommended for students to submit required paperwork to SMU prior to the term begin date.

## **What is the current payment rate of benefits, including the Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA)?**

The tuition and fee payment rate, and MHA are effective at the beginning of each military academic year on August 1st. Students exclusively enrolled in distance learning courses will be eligible for a MHA equal to 50% of the national average. The current rate table is located on the [Education and Training page of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs site](#).

Because SMU is a private university, students who receive Post-9/11 GI Bill benefits are subject to a maximum tuition and fee reimbursement per academic year (August 1 through July 31). The amount of the national cap changes each year on August 1,

and is available to be used from August 1 to July 31 of the following year. When VA benefits are calculated, the amount of this national cap must be expended before Yellow Ribbon Program benefits can be awarded, if applicable.

### **What is the Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP)?**

The Yellow Ribbon Program allows degree-granting colleges and universities in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the annual national maximum cap per military academic year. Participating institutions choose their contribution amount, the VA matches that amount, and issue payment directly to the school.

Veterans who are utilizing Post-9/11 GI Benefits and who are entitled to 100% of their benefit may be eligible. For additional information on the Yellow Ribbon Program, visit the [U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs website](#).

### **Does SMU participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP)?**

SMU supports our valued Armed Forces members and veterans and is participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program for the 2019–2020 academic year. To qualify for the Yellow Ribbon program you must be 100% eligible for the Post-9/11 GI Bill. At this time, active duty service members do not qualify for Yellow Ribbon.

For eligible students, SMU will contribute \$7,500 per academic year. The VA will match the contribution amount, **for a total of \$15,000 per academic year**. Yellow Ribbon can be utilized after the maximum VA annual tuition cap has been met.

Veterans who wish to be considered for the Yellow Ribbon Program must complete and submit the [SMU YRP application](#). YRP application and all [other required forms](#) must be sent to [VABenefits@smu.edu](mailto:VABenefits@smu.edu).

Please note that acceptance to the Yellow Ribbon Program is first-come, first-served. [DataScience@SMU](mailto:DataScience@SMU) generally allows 12 eligible students in the Yellow Ribbon Program for the academic year.

### **Who can I contact at SMU for questions about using Military Education Benefits?**

For questions regarding the use of your military education benefits at SMU, please contact the [SMU Certifying Official](#).

# Tax Benefits for Education

## How do I qualify for a tuition tax credit?

For details on tax benefits for education, see IRS [Publication 970](#). Tax Benefits for Higher Education, which provides detailed information. (name of university) is unable to provide tax advice. We urge you to contact your tax advisor or the IRS at [800-829-1040](tel:800-829-1040) or [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov) if you have any questions regarding the HOPE or Lifetime Learning Tax Credits.

## What is the 1098-T Form?

It is an informational form filed with the Internal Revenue Service to report the amounts billed to you for qualified tuition, related expenses, and other related information. The primary purpose of the IRS Form 1098-T is to inform you that we have provided this required information to the IRS.

## What information is included in the 1098-T Form?

Form 1098-T reports amounts paid for qualified tuition, scholarship and grants processed in 2018 to students enrolled in courses at SMU for which they receive academic credit. The information reported on the 1098-T form helps students evaluate whether he or she is eligible for an educational tax credit.

## How do I obtain my 1098-T Form?

1098-T forms are mailed in January to all student's home addresses. Please make sure your home address and mail addresses are current. The information on the form reflects the amounts posted to the student account including tuition and related fees and scholarships, grants and Third Party Billing credits that were posted in the tax year (January 1 through December 31 of that year). Please note that the 1098-T form will not include your personal payments. You will need to reference your personal financial records to review your personal payments to SMU. For more information, please visit [the Bursar FAQs](#).