

Federal Direct Stafford Loans for Graduate Students, Law Students and Students-at-Large

Federal Direct Stafford Loans (DL) are low interest loans that are borrowed through the U.S. Department of Education by the student.

Fixed Interest Rates

Subsidized Stafford Loan – 6.8%

Unsubsidized Direct Stafford Loans - 6.8%

Repayment

Repayment of the principal amount begins 6 months after the student graduates, leaves school, or drops to less than half-time per semester.

Half-Time Status at NIU per Semester

- **Graduate Students – Must be enrolled in *graduate level courses***
 - 4.5 credit hours Fall or Spring
 - 3 credit hours Summer
- **Eligible Students-at-Large (SAL) – Must be enrolled in *graduate level courses* unless you are enrolled in a state required teacher certification program.**
 - 6 credit hours Fall or Spring
 - 3 credit hours Summer
- **Law Students – as determined by the law school**
 - 9 credit hours Fall or Spring

Half-Time Status for Student Loans

A student is considered half-time when carrying at least one-half the academic workload of a full-time student *as determined by the school*. All Graduate and Law students must be enrolled in graduate level courses to count towards half-time status for student loan eligibility. Undergraduate level courses will not be counted, as well as audit hours, towards half-time status.

Students-at-Large must complete the [Student-at-Large Loan Eligibility Form](#) before applying for student loans. Once the form is completed, a determination will be made on their financial aid eligibility and sent to the student's NIU Z-ID email address.

Only **eligible Students-at-Large** can receive Stafford Loans for a period of 12 continuous months, or borrow a maximum of \$12,500, whichever comes first. Otherwise, if not eligible, SAL's can borrow [private loans](#) offered through lenders and banks.

There are 2 types of Direct Stafford Loans

Subsidized Direct Stafford Loan - awarded on the basis of financial need. The government will pay the interest on this loan while the student is attending school at least half-time per semester.

Unsubsidized Direct Stafford Loan - not awarded on the basis of need. The student is responsible for the interest payments from the time the loan is disbursed.

Stafford Loan Limits

Graduate, Law and SAL students who want to borrow through the Direct Lending program must be:

- enrolled at least half-time per semester and
- cannot exceed their loan limit for the academic year (annual loan limit) and
- cannot exceed their cumulative Stafford Loan limits, aggregate amounts. This limit is the total amount of loans you can borrow in your academic career. The amounts are determined by the academic status and academic year.

Annual Stafford Loan Limits	
Academic Classification	Loan Amounts per Academic Year
Eligible Students-at-Large (SAL)	Up to \$12,500 (maximum \$5500 Subsidized) Eligible to receive for only ONE continuous 12 month period (academic year)
Graduate Students & Law Students	Up to \$20,500 (maximum \$8500 Subsidized)

SAL Aggregate Amounts

Dependent Student: \$31,000 (no more than \$23,000 of which can be Subsidized)

Independent Student: \$57,500 (no more than \$23,000 of which can be Unsubsidized)

Graduate and Law Aggregate Amounts

\$65,500 Subsidized/\$73,000 Unsubsidized

\$138,500 (combination of Subsidized and Unsubsidized)

Tools and Resources

Borrower Web Sites

- **Federal Student Aid Information**
<http://www.studentaid.ed.gov>
- **Direct Loan Servicing Center – Borrower Services**
<http://www.dl.ed.gov>
- **Direct Loan Consolidation Center**
<http://www.loanconsolidation.ed.gov>
- **Federal Student Aid Ombudsman**
<http://www.ombudsman.ed.gov>

Borrower Call Centers

- **Federal Student Aid Information**
 - (800) 433-7327
- **Direct Loan Servicing Center – Borrower Services**
 - (800) 848-0979
- **Direct Loan Consolidation Center**
 - (800) 557-7392
- **Federal Student Aid Ombudsman**
 - (877) 557-2575

Direct Loan Master Promissory Note (MPN)

<https://dlenote.ed.gov/empn/aboutmpn.jsp>

- (800) 848-0978

Note: A Master Promissory Note (MPN) through Direct Lending needs to be signed every 10 years. If you are a transfer or returning student, you can check the date you signed your last MPN. If your 10 years has expired you will need to complete a new MPN for any subsequent Stafford Loans to be processed.