

Frequently Asked Questions

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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 at [DataScience@SMU](#).

How much is the confirmation deposit?

A nonrefundable \$500 tuition prepayment is required prior to enrollment.

Can I use financial aid to cover the deposit?

Federal student aid cannot be used to pay the deposit.

Is the deposit required to be paid before I can receive my award package?

Yes. Students will need to pay their deposit before being reviewed for awarding.

How does billing work?

Students will need to connect with the [Bursar's Office](#) for additional information regarding paying their bill.

How do I pay my bill (electronic debit, check, money order, etc.)?

The accepted forms of payment are electronic checks, credit cards (all major cards except Visa) and paper checks.

How does my employer go about paying the school?

Please visit [Payment Plan Options](#) for more information.

Does the school offer payment plan options?

Yes. There are three types of payments plans: the annual payment plan, payment plan by term, and the summer payment plan. Please contact the [Bursar's Office](#) for more information.

Will I be able to start classes if my funds are received after the payment due date?

Contact the [SMU Bursar's Office](#) for more information.

What is the process if I'm eligible for a refund?

You can access [RefundSelect](#) by logging in to my.SMU, selecting the "Financial Account" tile and clicking on the "MyRefundSMU" link in the left-hand menu.

Who can I contact at SMU for billing questions?

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

Financial Aid

Are internal scholarships available for this program?

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

Are there any school-specific supplemental financial aid forms I need to complete?

There are no supplemental financial aid forms. However, you may be selected for verification, which may require additional documentation. In order for your loans to disburse, you will need to complete the master promissory note and entrance counseling for both the Direct Unsubsidized Loan and the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan.

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

Students need a minimum of 4.5 credits per term to receive federal financial aid.

Once admitted, how long will it take to receive my FA award package?

Students generally receive their award letter two to four weeks prior to classes starting.

How will I receive my financial aid award letter?

You will receive your award letter via the student portal and SMU email.

How do I accept my student loans?

You will need to log in to the Financial Aid section of your portal to accept your award.

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

No, you can choose to accept all, part or none of your financial aid award.

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, you may borrow for tuition and fees in full for the current academic year you are enrolled.

How soon will loans disburse to my student account?

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

How are the loans disbursed per term?

Loans are disbursed directly to the student account to pay the tuition balance 10 days before the first day of class. Students must be registered for a minimum of 4.5 credit hours for federal loan disbursement. For private loan disbursement, please check with the lender once notified of the loan certification completed by the university.

Can I use loans to cover additional expenses (housing, books, supplies, etc.)?

DataScience@SMU students are eligible to use federal student aid for tuition and fees only. Students are not allowed to borrow additional funds for indirect expenses such as housing or books.

Can I use loans to cover immersions?

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 our [Forms Library](#) for more information.

Who can I contact at SMU for financial aid questions?

Charmissa Ajakaiye: ajakaiye@mail.smu.edu OR gradfinaid@mail.smu.edu

FAFSA

What is the FAFSA?

The [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) is the application the Department of Education uses to determine if you are eligible to receive federal student aid to fund your undergraduate and graduate programs.

Where can I find the FAFSA?

The FAFSA is available online at [FAFSA.ed.gov](https://fafsa.ed.gov). The FAFSA is a FREE application, so if a website is asking you to pay to complete it, then you have gone to the wrong website.

What is the University FAFSA school code?

SMU's FAFSA school code is 003613.

Do I need my parents' tax information to complete the FAFSA if I live on my own?

If you are applying for graduate school, you do not need your parents' information to complete the FAFSA. If you are applying for an undergraduate program, you will need to check out the dependency requirements to determine which additional forms may be required.

When should I complete the FAFSA?

The FAFSA is available every October for the upcoming academic year. If you are planning to use federal student aid, you should complete your FAFSA while applying for admission.

Start	Term	FAFSA Year
September 2019	Fall	2019–2020
January 2020	Spring	2019–2020
May 2020	Summer	2019–2020

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 July 1 of one year and ends on June 30 of the following year.

What federal student aid is available to graduate students?

The types of 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 here.](#)

Will I need to fill out the FAFSA each year?

Yes, you will need to complete the FAFSA for each academic year you plan to apply for federal student aid.

Why am I not eligible for the Pell Grant or Federal Subsidized Loan?

The Department of Education awards Federal Pell Grants and Direct Subsidized Loans to eligible undergraduate students who have not yet completed their bachelor's degrees and who demonstrate financial need. The Department of Education does not evaluate need or income for loans at the graduate/professional level. Therefore, graduate students are not eligible for the Pell Grant or the Direct Subsidized Loan.

Tax Benefits for Education

How do I qualify for a tuition tax credit?

To see if you qualify for a tax credit see IRS [Publication 970](#), Form 8863, and the Form 1040 instructions. **Southern Methodist University** is unable to provide tax advice. You should contact your tax advisor or the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) at 800-829-1040 or www.irs.gov if you have any questions regarding the HOPE or Lifetime Learning Tax Credits.

What is the 1098-T Form?

It is a required tax form for all eligible educational institutions to provide to enrolled students and the IRS.

What information is included in the 1098-T Form?

Form 1098-T reports amounts paid for qualified tuition and related expenses, as well as scholarship and grants processed in the tax year of the form to students enrolled in courses at **Southern Methodist University**. 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?

Please visit [the SMU 1098-T Form page](#).

Direct Unsubsidized Loan

What criteria are used to determine eligibility for federal student aid?

In order to apply for federal student aid, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen
- Have a valid SSN
- Be registered with Selective Service if you're 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
- The Direct Unsubsidized Loan is not based on need or income. You can learn more about federal student aid eligibility criteria [here](#).

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What if I am currently in default or have defaulted on a prior federal student loan?

Visit the [National Student Loan Data System](#) (NSLDS) and contact your lender for details on how to clear the default. Students in default are not eligible for additional federal loans until the default is cleared.

What is the aggregate loan limit?

This is the total amount that you may borrow for undergraduate and graduate study. [Learn more about aggregate loan amounts here.](#)

How do I find out if I am near my aggregate loan limit?

You may visit the [National Student Loan Data System](#) website to view your federal student loan borrowing history. Please note that private education loans are not listed on this site.

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. Direct Unsubsidized Loans are available to undergraduate and graduate students; there is no requirement to demonstrate

financial need. The unsubsidized loan begins accruing interest as soon as funds are disbursed. [Learn more about the difference between unsubsidized and subsidized loans here.](#)

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 with the Direct Unsubsidized Loan. [Learn more about graduate annual loan limits here.](#)

How do I apply for the Direct Unsubsidized Loan?

To apply for a Direct Loan, you must first complete and submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid ([FAFSA](#)). Your school will use the information from your FAFSA to determine how much student aid you are eligible to receive.

What is the current Direct Unsubsidized Loan interest rate?

The [Direct Unsubsidized Loan interest rate](#) is determined at the beginning of each academic year and is available on the StudentAid.gov 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 here.](#)

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 here.](#)

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

In order to apply for a Direct PLUS Loan, you must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen
- Have a valid SSN
- Be registered with Selective Service if you're 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
- Not have an adverse credit history
- The Graduate PLUS Loan is based on credit history.

Does the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan affect my aggregate loan limit?

No. Only Direct Subsidized and 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 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. [A list of what constitutes "adverse credit history" can be found here.](#)

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

If approved for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan, you can borrow up to the cost of attendance as determined by SMU, less any other financial aid received.

When can I apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan?

You can apply for the Direct Graduate Plus Loan at the time you are offered the Plus Loan eligibility award by the university. The credit life of the loan is good for 180 days.

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 and are awarded loan eligibility by the university, you can [apply for the Direct Graduate PLUS Loan](#) by completing the credit application at StudentLoans.gov. Also complete the [Graduate PLUS Master Promissory Note \(MPN\)](#).

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 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 StudentAid.gov website.

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 PLUS Loan origination fees can be found here.](#)

Loan Repayment

Do I have to pay my student loans back while I'm in school?

You are not required to pay on your student loans while you are in school as long as you are enrolled at least half time (4.5 credit hours). Your unsubsidized loan will go into repayment six months after you graduate, take a leave of absence or fall below half-time status.

When do I have to pay back 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 here.](#)

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

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

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

Yes, visit the [DOE website](#) for repayment calculators.

Can I consolidate my graduate loans and my undergraduate loans?

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

Are there any loan forgiveness options available?

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](#).

What documents are required to process Military Education Benefits?

Visit Vets.gov to complete the [Education Benefits Application](#), which generates a request for the Certificate of Eligibility (COE). Once approved for benefits, the VA will mail the COE to you within 6-8 weeks from submitting the application.

What is the difference between active and non-active duty?

Active Duty refers to someone who is in the military full time and is not currently eligible for the Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP). Non-Active Duty refers to someone who is not currently serving or no longer serving in any capacity of military service of the United States and is eligible for YR if at 100% per the COE.

What are the eligibility factors for the Post-9/11 GI Bill?

You are potentially eligible for this VA-administered program if you have at least 90 days of aggregate active-duty service after September 10, 2001, and are still on active duty, or if you are an honorably discharged veteran or were discharged with a service-connected disability after 30 days. [Learn more about the Post-9/11 GI Bill here](#).

What is the current tuition and fee payment rate, and Monthly Housing Allowance (MHA)?

The tuition and fee payment rate, and MHA are determined at the beginning of each military academic year on August 1st. The current rate table is located on the [Education and Training page of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs site](#).

What is the Yellow Ribbon Program (YRP)?

The Yellow Ribbon program allows degree-granting private colleges and universities in the United States to voluntarily enter into an agreement with the VA to fund tuition expenses that exceed the annual maximum cap for the resident tuition and fees at public institutions. Veterans who are utilizing Post-9/11 GI Benefits and who are entitled to 100% of their benefit may be eligible. To participate in the Yellow Ribbon program, you must be using Post-9/11 GI benefits at 100% eligibility, not on active duty, and not a military spouse. There are a limited number of Yellow Ribbon awards available. [Learn more about the Yellow Ribbon Program](#).

Does SMU participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program?

SMU supports our valued Armed Forces members and veterans and is participating in the Yellow Ribbon Program for the 2019–2020 academic year.

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.

For example, an eligible student who enrolls in Fall 2019 would receive \$30,000 in total benefits throughout the program, assuming he/she graduates in 5 terms.

2019–2020 academic year: \$15,000

2020–2021 academic year: \$15,000

Veterans who wish to be considered for the Yellow Ribbon Program [must complete and submit this application to the SMU VA Certifying Official.](#)

Please note that acceptance to the Yellow Ribbon Program is first-come, first-serve. DataScience@SMU will participate in the Yellow Ribbon Program for eight students this year.

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

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