How do I apply for a Grad PLUS Loan?

A Grad PLUS Loan is a loan from the federal government to graduate students. Grad PLUS loans are credit based using the borrower’s financial information to determine if the loan will be approved. Students who are not approved for the Grad PLUS Loan may appeal the credit decision or apply with a co-signer (also called an endorser).

To be eligible to apply for a Grad PLUS Loan an individual must be:

• A degree seeking Graduate, Law, or Doctoral student enrolled at least half-time.
• A student must also have a FAFSA on file for the financial aid year. Ex: for Spring 21 a 2020-2021 FAFSA must be filed.

The following individuals are not eligible to apply for a Grad PLUS Loan:

• An Undergraduate Student
• A Student-at-Large
• A Post-Baccalaureate Student
• A Visiting Student
• A student enrolled less than half-time

To apply for a Grad PLUS loan the Student borrower must go to studentaid.gov and “Log In” using their FSA ID and password.
Move your mouse to the top of the page and hover over the “APPLY FOR AID” dropdown. Click on the link that says: “Apply for a Grad Plus Loan” when it appears.

Click the “Start” button under Apply for a Plus Loan.

Select the award year that you will be attending. For example, if you are starting in the Fall of 2020, Spring of 2021, or Summer of 2021, the award year will be 2020-2021.
Check the box if you want to authorize the loan to pay for additional charges.

I authorize the school to use my Direct PLUS Loan to pay for other educationally related charges that I incur at the school, as described above.

Search for the school by selecting “Illinois” as the state and “Northern Illinois University” as the school name. When the school has been selected your screen should look like the one below on the right. Once the Grad Plus Loan application has been submitted the US Department of Education will send the results to NIU in a few days.

Select School to Notify
- U.S. Schools/U.S. Territory Schools
- Non U.S. Schools

Choose a state:
- Select -

Search school by name:
- Select or type
Select the "Loan Amount Requested" as either:

- "I want to borrow the maximum Direct PLUS for which I am eligible, as determined by the school"
- "I would like to specify a loan amount" then type in the loan amount you want. (You can contact the financial aid office for a recommended amount based on your student’s other aid and charges.)
  
  Note: An amount must be specified or the application process will be delayed while the school requests this information.
- "I do not know the amount I want to borrow. I will contact the school"
  
  Note: if you choose this option, it is important you contact the school or the application process will be delayed while the school requests the information.

Select the Loan Period from the drop-down list:

- For most borrowers we recommend choosing a full year loan if the student will be enrolled in both the Fall and Spring semesters.
- If you are graduating in Fall 2020 or you only want a Fall semester loan — select Fall only
- If you are starting in the Spring 2021 or you only want a Spring semester loan — select Spring only

Note: Contact the Student Financial Aid Office if you are unsure when you will be attending.

Click "Continue" at the bottom to move on to the next step.
Enter your information into the Borrower section. Some of the data fields may be populated with information that is already on file for you. Verify the information is correct before moving on.

Enter your employer information into the fields. If you are not employed check the box.

Click “Continue” at the bottom to move on to the next step.
Review the information and update if necessary.
Review the “IMPORTANT NOTICES” by selecting the link.

Certify the accuracy of the information on the application by checking the first box.

Authorize the Department of Education to check the credit of the borrower by checking the second box.

Upon selecting “Continue” the results of the PLUS application will be displayed.
Loan funds are disbursed to the Bursar account after the add/drop period is closed. If the Federal Direct Grad PLUS disbursement generates a refund after University charges are paid, the refunded amount will be mailed to you.

If the disbursement generates a parent refund, you have the option of signing up for direct deposit. Direct Deposit offers a timely, reliable, and safe way to deliver your refund to your checking or savings account. For more information on refunds, please see the Bursar Office Website.

**What happens if the Grad PLUS Loan is denied?**

If the Grad PLUS Loan is denied, there are two options available:

- **Apply with an endorser**—allows the borrower to reapply with a co-signer. An endorser is someone who agrees to repay the Grad PLUS Loan if the borrower becomes delinquent in making payments or defaults on the loan.

  The endorser will need to go to studentaid.gov and know the student’s name and the Endorser Code.

- **Appeal the credit decision**—allows the borrower to provide documentation to the Department of Education to prove extenuating circumstances that may override the initial credit decision. More information on the appeal process can be found at studentaid.gov

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Based on the results of your credit check, we are unable to approve your request for a Direct PLUS Loan. However, you may still receive a Direct PLUS Loan if you obtain an endorser, or if you document to the satisfaction of the U.S. Department of Education that there are extenuating circumstances related to your adverse credit history.

Under federal law, you’re entitled to a free credit report if a company takes adverse action against you: such as denying your application for credit, insurance, or employment. And you ask for your report within 60 days of receiving notice of the action. The notice will give you the name, address, and phone number of the credit reporting company. Otherwise, a credit reporting company may charge you up to $1.10 for another copy of your report within a 12-month period.

To obtain a copy of your credit report, contact:
- Equifax: 1-800-685-1111; equifax.com
- Experian: 1-888-397-3742; experian.com
- TransUnion: 1-800-916-8803; transunion.com

**View Credit Check Details**

Indicate how you want to proceed by checking the appropriate box below and click “Submit.” Your response will be reported to the school that you selected on the Direct PLUS Loan Request.

How would you like to proceed?

- I want to obtain an endorser.
- I want to provide documentation of extenuating circumstances.

Submit