

Financial Aid: Things you should know

What happens after a FAFSA is filed? (FAFSA = Free Application for Federal Student Aid) FAFSA central processing system (CPS) takes 1 to 3 days to process. **3 possible results:**

- Student gets a **good EFC** (expected family contribution) on first try. We have what we need to calculate your aid eligibility.
- **FAFSA is rejected** because of a critical error or omission. We let you know what needs to be done to fix the error or omission, but you can also find this on your student aid report (SAR). Until you fix the error and the correction processed by CPS, we cannot calculate your aid eligibility.
- Student is identified for **verification** by CPS. About 1 of 3 FAFSAs is identified.
 - Student/parents need to reconfirm some information that was on the FAFSA.
 - After we process the information, we submit the data to CPS. Then after we get the official EFC, we can calculate your aid eligibility.
 - We can't give you good information about your financial aid eligibility until you provide complete and accurate information for verification.

How many credits do I have to register for to qualify for financial aid? This depends on what kind of aid you want.

- If your FAFSA result is low enough, you qualify for Pell grant with even less than 3 credits.
- To qualify for student loans or work-study, you must be in at least 6 credits.
- If you qualify for state grants (O'Bannon, Academic Honors, and 21st Century Scholars), you must be in at least 12 credits to get those funds. Recent legislation requires 21st Century Scholars to pass at least 30 credits each year to qualify for the next year. O'Bannon grant recipients must pass 30 for full renewal and at least 24 credits for a reduced grant renewal.
- Most university and VU Foundation scholarships require you to be in at least 12 credits, and most have GPA requirements for renewal.

What happens if I don't earn good grades in my courses? The first semester you fall short of the minimum GPA for the number of credits you've attempted, you are put on **financial aid warning**. You will still receive your aid, but you will also receive an e-mail reminding you that you have to improve to avoid being put on suspension. For financial aid purposes grades in developmental courses affect GPA. Here are the minimum GPAs for different numbers of credits:

- 1.8 after you've attempted 12 credits up to 29 credits.
- 1.9 after you've attempted 30 credits up to 44 credits.
- 2.0 after you've attempted 45 credits.

The second semester you fall short of the GPA listed above, you are on **financial aid suspension**. Then you are not eligible for financial aid. However, you can submit an appeal, along with documentation, explaining the reasons you did not do as well as you should have. If we can approve this appeal, you are put on **financial aid probation**. You regain your aid, but we put you on an academic plan that outlines your target GPA for the next several semesters. If you don't meet the target GPA in your academic plan, your aid is suspended again.

What happens if I withdraw from (drop) some courses? Just like with GPA, you have to maintain a minimum completion rate or pace to stay eligible for aid. So, if you drop some courses or get withdrawn from courses for nonattendance, your completion rate or pace drops. Here are the minimum completion rates for different numbers of credits:

- 60% after you've attempted 12 credits up to 29 credits.
- 63% after you've attempted 30 credits up to 44 credits.
- 67% after you've attempted 45 credits.

Just like with GPA, the first semester you fall short, you are on **financial aid warning**. The second semester you fall short, you are on **financial aid suspension**. If you appeal and we can approve the appeal, you are on **financial aid probation**. Then to continue to receive aid, you have to complete the number of credits outlined in the academic plan we provide you..

Can I receive federal financial aid if I repeat a course? You are aid-eligible for *one repeat of an already passed course*. Suppose you get a D in a course but need a C for it to count toward graduation. You get one more try with aid. After that, we can't count those credits in your credit load for federal financial aid purposes.

What happens to my financial aid if I have to take developmental courses? *Federal aid eligibility* is limited to 30 attempted credits of any combination of these courses. After that we are not allowed to count any of these courses in your credit load for financial aid purposes. *State aid eligibility* is limited to 12 credits of these courses in the first year. At VU these courses are ENGL, MATH, MATT, READ, SSKL, and SSTP whose number begins with a zero (0).

What happens if I withdraw from all my courses? If you have to drop all your courses, you must do that officially through the dean of students office. You shouldn't just stop going to class. But whether you officially withdraw or unofficially get taken out of all your classes, we have to recalculate your eligibility for the aid you have received. Depending on when you withdraw, we may have to return some of your aid to the federal department of education. Then you will probably owe the university for at least some of the amount of aid we had to return.

Does enrollment in distance education courses affect my aid eligibility? Most distance education courses at VU are treated just like in-classroom courses. However, for students who enroll in all 12-week, 10-week, or 8-week courses, we have to reduce the estimated cost of attendance (COA). COA determines the maximum amount of aid a student can receive if we can find that much aid.

How much can I borrow in loans each year?

AS, AA, CG, CPC, BS (degrees & certificates)	Subsidized	Unsubsidized	Combined
Dependent with < 31 credits earned	up to 3500	2000 +	up to 5500
Independent < 31 cr & (Dependent + PLUS denial)	up to 3500	6000 +	up to 9500
Dependent with ≥ 31 credits earned	up to 4500	2000 +	up to 6500
Independent ≥ 31 cr & (Dependent + PLUS denial)	up to 4500	6000 +	up to 10500
Bachelor of Science seekers only			
Dependent with ≥ 61 credits earned	up to 5500	2000 +	up to 7500
Independent ≥ 61 cr & (Dependent + PLUS denial)	up to 5500	7000 +	up to 12500

Parent PLUS loan: Parents of dependent students can apply for up to the amount listed on the award letter. Eligibility for these loans depends on the parent applicant having good enough credit to get approved by the department of education. *If a parent applies for a PLUS loan and gets denied*, the student is eligible for up to the additional \$4000 each year in unsubsidized loans.

How much in student loans can I borrow totally toward my degree? For undergraduates:

- Lifetime eligibility for dependent students is limited to \$31,000. Up to \$23,000 can be subsidized loans. (This can increase to \$57,500 if parents have been denied a PLUS loan.)
- Lifetime eligibility for independent students is limited to \$57,500. Up to \$23,000 can be subsidized loans.

How long can I receive a Pell grant if I qualify? All students are currently limited to 600% of their annual eligibility, that is, the equivalent of 6 years of full-time Pell. Suppose you are enrolled in only 12 credits for your first year. That is 50% of that year's Pell grant, and you would have 550% of your lifetime eligibility left for future years.