

# **2024-25**

## **Graduate Student Finances Handbook**



UNIVERSITY of WISCONSIN  
**MILWAUKEE**

**Guide to Financial Aid & Billing Process**

**\*\* Required Reading \*\***

**For all Financial Aid Recipients**

---

**UW-Milwaukee  
2024-25 Graduate Student  
Finances Handbook  
Table of Contents**

<b>Section/Topic</b>	<b>Page</b>
Table of Contents	1
Introducing the Student Financial Service Center	2
Panther Access to Web Services (PAWS)	2
Next Steps	3
Your Financial Aid Offer	3
College Financing Plan	4
How Your Financial Aid Eligibility is Determined	4
Estimated Cost of Attendance (COA)/Budget	5
Student Aid Index (SAI)	6
Special Circumstances	7
Non-degree Students	7
Types of Aid	7
Scholarships	8
Grants	8
Federal Work Study	8
Loans	8
Direct Loan Limits and Requirements	9
Entrance Counseling & Federal Direct Loan Master	9
Promissory Note (MPN)	
Additional Financial Resources	9
Federal Direct Graduate Loan	10
Private Educational Loan Programs	10
Military Education Benefits	10
Disbursement	10
Causes for Delay in Disbursement	11
Census Date	11
Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)	11
Graduate Student SAP	11
Thinking of Dropping a Class or Withdrawing?	12
Dropping Classes	12
Withdrawing	12
Student Rights and Responsibilities	13
Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)	13
Ways to Reach Us	14

### Introducing the Student Financial Service Center

The Student Financial Service Center (SFSC) is a single office that serves as students' and families' go-to place for answers to questions about Scholarships, Financial Aid, and Billing. Ways to contact us can be found at the end of this document.

### Finances Guide

Filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the first step needed to receive help with financing your college education. Although the Department of Education has experienced many delays with launching the 2024-25 FAFSA, hopefully you found the new Simplified FAFSA much easier to navigate. Please use this document for help on how the rest of the college financing process works.

It is important to have an idea of how much your expenses will be and how you are going to pay them before classes begin. We hope you will read this document, which explains:

- **NEXT STEPS** needed to ensure your aid disburses on time,
- Estimated costs, billing and financial aid disbursement timelines, the importance of creating a budget, and using the UWM Cost Estimator tool,
- Some additional resources that may be available to you if you have a gap between your costs and what is available to you from financial aid and your personal resources.

### [Panther Access to Web Services \(PAWS\)](#)

PAWS is your student portal. Check your PAWS Student Center often—even during the summer months. It has a lot of information. You can often find answers to questions without having to contact someone. Review all of the various links, but pay particular attention to:

**Finances Section:** View, accept, reduce, or decline aid offered to you in this section. Click on each item offered for more information about that type of aid. Once billing statements have been created each semester (about a month prior to the first day of classes), the link to "View Billing Statement" will be the best place to see your charges and your financial aid together in one place. Once aid has disbursed, the best place to view charges and payments is Account Activity.

**To Do List:** If we need additional information from you, you will usually see it here. It is important for you to resolve items listed here.

Need help navigating your PAWS account? Review our [PAWS Finances Tutorial](#).

## NEXT STEPS

Use this checklist to finish all the requirements necessary to fund your education:

- ✓ 1. File a FAFSA-Done if you have an aid offer.
2. Read your emails from us—year-round. We use the email address you provided on your admission application until you receive one from UWM. You are expected to monitor (or forward) your UWM email.
3. Review your PAWS TO DO List and complete these items in a timely manner.
4. Read this handbook for details on how to access the funds offered.
5. Review the [PAWS Finances Tutorial](#) for help understanding your billing statement.
6. Go to your PAWS Student Center to view, accept reduce, or decline your aid within 30 days or by June 1 prior to the fall semester, whichever is later. (Scholarships have earlier dates).
7. Complete several steps at [studentaid.gov](http://studentaid.gov):
  - a. Complete a [Direct Loan Master Promissory Notes \(MPNs\)](#), the loan application, and [Entrance Counseling](#), a tutorial and quiz, if borrowing a Direct Loan for the first time.
8. [Notify us](#) if you will receive other types of assistance not reflected on your aid offer.
9. Enroll in at least four graduate-level credits, three credits as a dissertator, or one credit taking prelims in order to be eligible for federal loans.
10. Actual costs are not available until summer. In the meantime, use our [UWM Total Cost Estimator](#) to develop your individual budget **FOR THE YEAR** in order to determine if you have enough funding or if you need to apply for [additional loans](#).

## Your Financial Aid Offer

### **Financial Aid Offer**

- Once your financial aid eligibility is determined, we will send you an email which includes your Financial Aid Offer. This is when you also gain access to Accept/Decline your aid in PAWS.
- There will be an attachment to the email for you to review estimated costs.
- Aid eligibility is based on FAFSA results, financial need, any specific criteria required by the various programs, and [the estimated cost of attendance](#).
- Original aid offers assume enrollment in at least 8 credits for graduate students. If you are a graduate student taking at least four credits, but less than eight, your financial aid records will be reviewed approximately two weeks before each semester starts and adjusted to match your enrollment. In most cases, this does not affect your Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan eligibility.

### **Types of Aid**

- Read the descriptions of the types of aid offered to you before accepting or declining.
- If you are offered Federal Work-Study and are unsure whether to accept it, accept it now to have the funds reserved for you.
- Making revisions to your FAFSA, or receiving assistance from outside sources, may affect the amount, as well as the type(s) of assistance you are eligible to receive.
- Most graduate students will only be offered a Federal Direct Unsubsidized loan.

## **Enrollment**

- The aid offered reflects your eligibility for fall and/or spring semester. We ask that you [notify us](#) if:
  - You have not been offered aid for a semester in which you plan to attend, and you believe you are eligible.
  - You are enrolling for only one semester, but have received an aid offer for two semesters.
  - Your career status will change during the academic year. (Example—graduate student for fall and prelim or dissertator student for spring.)
  - You will not attend. All undisbursed aid will be canceled 15 days after the beginning of the semester if you have not registered for classes or you are in an ineligible status.
  - You are receiving a fellowship from the University (which may include a monthly stipend and/or tuition waiver), and it *does not* appear in your financial aid in PAWS. Fellowships, scholarships, traineeships, Chancellor's Graduate Student Awards, and most other educational resources must be included when determining your eligibility for federal student aid. Teaching, Project, and Research Assistantships (TAs/PAs/RAs) do not affect your eligibility for financial aid; however, if you file a FAFSA next year, you should report assistantships as untaxed income. Our office must report all of these resources annually to the Universities of Wisconsin.

## **College Financing Plan**

UWM, and many other colleges, provide a College Financing Plan. This standardized form was created to simplify the information that prospective students receive about costs and financial aid so that they can easily compare institutions and make informed decisions about where to attend school. Students who have been offered financial aid will see this as a link in the View Financial Aid page in their PAWS Student Center. You are encouraged to print and save this.

### **How Your Financial Aid Eligibility is Determined**

## **Eligibility Requirements**

**To be offered federal, state, or institutional funds administered by UWM's Office of Financial Aid Administration, you must:**

1. File a [FAFSA](#) each year.
2. Be admitted to UWM in a degree-granting program or as an eligible [non-degree student](#).
3. Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate.
4. Be a U. S. citizen or an eligible non-citizen.
5. Have a valid Social Security Number.
6. Not be in default on a student loan. Review your federal loans in your dashboard after logging in at <https://studentaid.gov>.
7. Not owe an overpayment on any federal (Title IV) aid.
8. Meet the [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) Standards](#) as defined by the Office of Financial Aid Administration.
9. Not be delinquent on court-ordered child support and/or maintenance (this applies only to State of Wisconsin-controlled grants).
10. Certify that you will use student aid only for educational purposes.
11. [Not be incarcerated](#). Students with criminal convictions have limited eligibility. Federal law requires students to inform the Office of Financial Aid Administration of their incarceration.

**In addition to the above requirements, to receive aid, you must:**

12. Be enrolled in a minimum of four credits as a graduate student, three credits as a dissertator, or one credit if prelim student. *Audit credits do not count.*
13. Not be retaking courses you already passed. If retaking a class you already passed (e.g. to receive a better grade), the course may be repeated only once to be counted toward enrollment status for financial aid eligibility. If you continue to repeat this passed course, Title IV federal funds can no longer pay for it.
14. Not be receiving financial aid from another institution for the same enrollment period. Students can only receive aid from one institution at a time—even if enrolled at two schools. However, in some cases, we can consider your enrollment and costs at another institution when determining your financial aid eligibility at UWM. For more information, review our [Consortium Agreement](#).
15. If another college has offered you aid for the same enrollment period, you will need to have that college cancel the pending aid before we will be able to disburse your aid. If you are a transfer student, we will take aid received for the same academic year into consideration when determining your remaining eligibility. If you received aid at another university for a summer term, please let our office know.
16. Establish and maintain eligibility for the programs for which you receive aid.

Students who have already satisfied all the requirements for their degree, but have not yet graduated, are not eligible for federal aid.

**Estimated Cost of Attendance (COA)/Financial Aid Budget**

The actual cost to attend UWM is different for each student, depending on variables such as degree type and major, housing and lifestyle choices, special course fees, and individual needs. **The Estimated Cost of Attendance (COA)** is a figure used by the Financial Aid Department in determining financial aid eligibility. This figure includes **estimates** of direct costs (university charges you will need to pay UWM) as well as indirect costs (educational and living expenses not paid to UWM). Because we use estimates, the figures will vary slightly from other published figures.

**Equation used in determining financial aid eligibility:**

$$\begin{array}{r} \text{Cost of Attendance (COA)} \\ - \text{Student Aid Index (SAI)} \\ \hline = \text{Financial Need} \end{array}$$

The following paragraphs explain where these figures come from. You can find the figures we used for you in the Finances section of your PAWS account. (Review [PAWS Finances Tutorial](#) for details.)

Budget categories included in the COA are tuition and fees, housing and food, books, course materials, supplies and equipment, miscellaneous personal expenses, transportation, and loan fees. The amounts being used for these categories are:

**2024-25 Estimated Cost of Attendance  
9 Month Enrollment Period  
Amounts Assume Two-Semesters of Full-time Enrollment**

<i>Tuition and Fees</i>	<i>Wisconsin Resident</i>	<i>MN Reciprocity</i>	<i>Midwest Student Exchange</i>	<i>Non-Resident</i>
<b>Graduate</b>	\$12,266	\$20,680	\$17,616	\$25,696

The figures below are estimates used for determining financial aid eligibility. Some of the amounts will be Direct Costs (owed UWM); some will be Indirect Costs (expenses you may or may not incur).

	<b>Living with Parent</b>	<b>Living On Campus</b>	<b>Living Off Campus</b>
Housing	\$1,500	\$13,626	\$13,626
Food	\$4,433	\$ 4,433	\$ 4,433
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, and Equipment	\$ 800	\$ 800	\$ 800
Transportation	\$1,676	\$1,676	\$1,676
Miscellaneous Personal Expenses	\$2,000	\$2,000	\$2,000

<i>Estimate of Total Cost for an Academic Year</i>	<i>Wisconsin Resident</i>	<i>MN Reciprocity</i>	<i>Midwest Student Exchange</i>	<i>Non-Resident</i>
<b>Graduate Living with Parent</b>	\$22,836	\$31,250	\$28,186	\$36,266
<b>Graduate Living Away from Parent</b>	\$34,962	\$43,376	\$40,312	\$48,392

As you create your own budget and plan for the school year, we encourage use of our online tool, the [UWM Total Cost Estimator](#). By using this tool, you may start thinking of things you could do, and choices you can make, to help you reduce your costs. While it might be nice to have a single room or apartment, sharing these costs with roommates may make more fiscal sense. You should also save as much money as possible from summer employment.

If your expenses are quite a bit more than what we have used for estimates, you can submit the Budget Adjustment Form (the form for 2024-25 becomes available April/May 2024) to our office for a possible adjustment. If approved, any additional eligibility is usually in the form of a private loan or Parent PLUS Loan.

### **Student Aid Index (SAI)**

**Beginning with the 2024-25 academic year, the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) has been replaced with the Student Aid Index (SAI).** The concept is the same, as it is an eligibility index used by Financial Aid Offices for distributing funds and is calculated according to a formula established by law. The formula still uses the information you supplied on your Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), but there have been changes to the formula. The changes should increase eligibility for many students, but some will see a decrease in their eligibility. You can find the SAI on your FAFSA Submission Summary and in the Finances area of your PAWS Student Center.

**The SAI is not the amount you pay.** For graduate students, the financial aid offer is typically based on the Estimated COA as well as the availability of a Federal Unsubsidized Loan for \$20,500 for the year. What you should do is take your personal budget figure and subtract the amount of financial aid you are eligible to receive. The result may be closer to what you actually need to contribute. In other words, your calculations will look like:

$$\begin{aligned} &\textbf{Your Direct Costs} \\ &- \textbf{Financial Aid Offered/Accepted} \\ &= \textbf{Amount you will need to contribute toward Direct Costs} \\ &\quad \textbf{using savings, work, private scholarships, and/or additional} \\ &\quad \textbf{loans} \end{aligned}$$

### **Special Circumstances**

Graduate students are evaluated for a Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan. Because this loan is based more on the estimated COA and not on financial need, having special circumstances, such as a loss in income in 2023 or expected for 2024, may not really have an effect on your financial aid eligibility. However, if your educational expenses are significantly more than what we estimated they would be, you may be able to submit a request for a Budget adjustment. This would then allow you to apply for additional loan funding, often in the form of a Grad PLUS or a Private Alternative loan. You can review the Budget Adjustment Form (the form for 2024-25 becomes available in late spring 2024) and submit it to our office with the documents indicated on the form. Students must have been offered financial aid based on actual information before a budget adjustment will be considered.

### **Non-Degree Students**

Students classified as [Non-Degree Students](#) are generally not eligible for financial aid. Exceptions are those [enrolled in eligible certificate programs](#) or those taking prerequisite courses for admission to a UWM second degree, graduate degree, or certification program. In those cases, students must document eligibility on a Non-degree Enrollment Verification form and have the form submitted as early as possible. Non-degree students without a Bachelor's degree are not eligible for financial aid.

If it is determined you are eligible for financial aid as a non-degree student, you will only be offered a Federal Direct Loan.

### **Types of Aid**

Most financial aid programs have limits. Some limits are an aggregate/total dollar amount (in the case of loans) and some are a maximum number of semesters (grants). These limits are not appealable. In addition to these limits, students must also adhere to the [Satisfactory Academic Progress \(SAP\) Policy](#) limits.

Financial aid applicants are evaluated for [Scholarships](#), [Grants](#), [Loans](#), and [Federal Work Study](#). We encourage you to visit these links for detailed information on the programs that you have been offered. The eligibility in many programs is limited for Graduate level students.

## **Scholarships**

A scholarship is gift aid. In most cases, scholarships do not have to be repaid if the enrollment period is completed. Scholarships are a valuable part of college financing and are typically given in recognition of a student's achievements. Students are strongly encouraged to visit the [Panther Scholarship Portal](#) to complete a general application in order to be considered for UWM scholarships.

## **Grants**

Graduate students are not eligible for grant funds unless specifically indicated in the descriptions.

The various grant programs are listed below. Details on each of the programs can be found on the Grants webpage, <http://grants.uwm.edu>.

### **Federal Grants:**

Federal Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education Grant (TEACH)

Bureau of Indian Affairs Grant

AmeriCorps Segal Education Award

### **Wisconsin Grants:**

Wisconsin Indian Assistance Grant

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Training Grant

## **Federal Work Study**

Work Study allows a student to earn money for educational expenses while attending college. Financial need and enrollment in at least one credit are required in order to earn funds through this program. If we offered you work-study, you need to find a job that allows you to earn these funds. For more information regarding on-campus employment, please visit [Handshake](#). Many jobs do not require Federal Work Study eligibility.

If you know that you will not earn the funds offered to you, please decline the aid through your PAWS account. UWM has a limited amount of Federal Work Study funds available. Declining any work-study you do not plan on earning allows us to offer the opportunity to another student. If you have not earned any work-study funds within 30 days of the start of the semester, we will cancel your entire work-study offer.

## **Loans**

Some loans have forgiveness provisions, but most require that principal and interest be repaid. A FAFSA must be submitted to be considered for most loans. While the Minority Teacher Loan and Private Alternative Loans do not require a FAFSA, students are encouraged to file a FAFSA first to take advantage of the best financial aid programs, prior to borrowing a private educational loan.

While student loans can be a good way to help finance an education, it is important to understand your responsibilities as a student loan borrower. All student loans will require that you sign a promissory note (the actual loan application). Read the description of any loan offer before making a decision to accept and borrow the loan. Keep copies of all loan documents.

A minimum enrollment in at least four graduate level credits, except for some alternative loan programs, is required to participate in all loan programs. Aid offers are for one academic year and require that the student complete a FAFSA each year to be considered for continuing eligibility.

The various loan programs are below. Each is linked to additional details found on the [loans.uwm.edu](http://loans.uwm.edu) web page.

[Federal Direct Loan – Subsidized](#)  
[Federal Direct Loan – Unsubsidized](#)  
[Federal Nursing Loan](#)  
[Minority Teacher Loan](#)  
[Federal Grad PLUS Loan](#)  
[Private Alternative Loan](#)

## Direct Loan Limits and Requirements

### **Federal Direct Loan Limits**

All maximum loan amounts below are for a 12-month period. While the UWM academic year begins with the fall semester and continues through the end of summer, a transfer student who received aid for summer using the 2024-25 academic year, would need to consider those loan disbursements when determining remaining eligibility for the academic year.

Annual Limit	\$20,500 (unsubsidized)
Aggregate Limit (includes Graduate and Undergraduate Direct and FFEL Loan outstanding principal balance:	\$138,500 (maximum of \$65,500 in subsidized funds)

### **Entrance Counseling and Federal Direct Loan Master Promissory Note (MPN)**

**Entrance Counseling** is required if you have never borrowed a Federal Direct loan as well as for any new Graduate PLUS loan borrowers. This is a tutorial and a quiz. **The Direct Loan MPN** is a loan application needed to receive the Federal Direct loan funds. The MPN is good for 10 years, as long as you receive a disbursement within 12 months of electronically signing the MPN.

Entrance counseling and a Direct Loan Master Promissory Note (MPN) are a one-time requirement. If you are borrowing a Federal loan for the first time, or your MPN is more than 10 years old, complete these items in order to allow your loan to disburse. Complete both online at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov).

Log In first using your FSA ID Username at [studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov). Under the “**Loans and Grants**” heading:

1. **Loan Entrance Counseling**  
Select Start. Make sure you select the correct type of counseling (graduate for anyone enrolled in a program beyond a bachelor’s degree.) You will also need to complete the “Add School to Notify” section on the left side of the screen. Then--
2. **Master Promissory Note (MPN)**  
You can select “Complete a Master Promissory Note under Next Steps on the final page of your counseling session or go back and select “Master Promissory Note (MPN)” and “I’m a Graduate/Professional Student.”

## Additional Financial Resources

The purpose of financial aid is to help bridge the difference between student/family resources and the amount needed to pay for the cost of attending college. In the case where the aid offered still leaves a gap and you need additional help, the Grad PLUS or Private Alternative Loan are two loan programs to consider as possible options. Borrowers can receive up to the Cost of Attendance less financial aid already offered.

### **Federal Direct PLUS Loan Program for Graduate/Professional Students**

This is a loan Graduate/Professional students may be able to borrow. Please select the link for more information and details listed on our website.

The Grad PLUS requires an application and a master promissory note (MPN). Both can be completed online. Complete the application at [Apply for a PLUS Loan](#). You should Log in using your FSA ID. Select the PLUS Loan for Graduate/Professional Students. If borrowing this loan for the first time, also complete a [Grad PLUS Master Promissory Note \(MPN\)](#).

PLUS Loans require an approved credit check. **If a PLUS application is denied**, the borrower may choose to add an approved endorser to the application (an endorser is a person who agrees to repay the PLUS loan if the borrower does not). This option requires that the endorser complete an Endorser Addendum which includes a credit check and the borrower/student complete [PLUS Credit Counseling](#).

An origination fee of approximately 4% is retained from the gross loan proceeds of a PLUS Loan. The actual fee is in the loan disclosure provided to the borrower. Once borrowed, the interest rate will be fixed. In early summer each year, the rate for new loans is announced. Please review the [Federal Student Aid website](#) for the most current information on interest rates and origination fees. The interest rates for loans disbursed in 2024-25 are announced in June 2024.

### **Private/Alternative Educational Loan Programs**

Offered by a financial institution, the student is typically the borrower and may be required to apply with a credit-worthy cosigner. Select this link to compare some of the more popular lender options and use our [online Private Alternative Loan application](#). Many lenders now offer fixed interest rates, while some have variable interest rates with no cap. It is up to the student/borrower to review the information, compare loans, and then decide which loan they wish to borrow.

### **Military Education Benefits**

Students returning from active federal military service or who are in the National Guard or Reserves can qualify for educational benefits to help with academic expenses. Additionally, dependents and spouses of veterans may be eligible for the same types of benefits. Contact the Military Education Benefits Office ([MEBO](#)) for more details. Federal military education benefits do not affect a student's eligibility for federal financial aid. As such, students receiving military education benefits are also encouraged to file a FAFSA. Eligibility for the Wisconsin GI Bill may affect eligibility for other financial aid programs. MEBO is located in the Union.

## **Disbursement**

Federal regulations allow disbursement to begin ten days before the first day of the semester. Once payment begins, we generally continue to disburse funds Monday, Wednesday, and Friday nights, except for holidays. You can confirm disbursement via the Account Activity link in your PAWS Student Center. Approximately a month before disbursement begins, we will send emails to students who may see a delay in their disbursement. If your funds have not disbursed by the due date, it is your responsibility to find out why in order to avoid finance charges. Monitor your UWM email, your PAWS To Do list, and PAWS Holds for possible reasons.

About a month before classes begin, you will receive an email telling you to view your university bill via your PAWS account. Please read all information carefully and [review important information on the Student Financial Services website](#). Selecting "View Billing Statement" via your PAWS account will provide you with a real time "Statement of Account."

Your statement will show your total charges (assuming charges for the semester have been determined) less "Anticipated Aid." If you owe the university, you may pay the difference by the due date. If you need more time to pay, you should consider signing up for the [Payment Plan](#). Address all billing and excess cash/refund questions to the Student Financial Service Center, (414) 229-4541 or email [finances@uwm.edu](mailto:finances@uwm.edu).

- If you have been offered aid for the semester that is *more than what you owe* the university for the semester, the excess cash will be given to you so that you can use the funds for your other educational expenses. These funds are sent via [direct deposit \(ACH\)](#) or are mailed to your active mailing address in PAWS approximately 2-3 business days after the refund posts to PAWS. Please allow an additional 7-10 days for printing, processing, and mailing if you are not using direct deposit—or-
- If the amount of aid offered for the semester *does not cover the amount you owe* for the semester, you will need to make that payment to the Office of Student Accounts. You can review billing information on the [Student Financial Services website](#). Select the Tuition Schedule for the appropriate semester.

For help determining whether you will receive an excess cash check or if you will have a balance due, use the [UWM Total Cost Estimator](#) tool on our website. You are encouraged to do this as early as possible—preferably prior to tuition bills being available on PAWS.

### **Causes for Delay in Disbursement**

To avoid delays in disbursement, make sure you have done all of the following, no later than August 1 for the fall semester and December 20 for the spring semester:

- **Are enrolled in a minimum of 4 graduate level credits if you are a traditional graduate or PhD student; 3 credits if you are a dissertator, or 1 credit if you are taking prelims.**
- **Confirmed you have been offered aid for the semester and have accepted any loan(s) that you are wanting to receive.**
- **Completed [entrance counseling](#) and the [DL Master Promissory Note](#) online** if you are borrowing through the Federal Direct Loan program for the first time.
- Canceled any aid offered to you by another school if you are transferring to UWM mid-year. A student may only receive aid from one college at a time. If you are taking classes at two schools, you need to make sure only one of them is disbursing aid. If both do, eventually one will need to cancel the aid and you will end up owing funds to them. If you are part-time at UWM and are needing to borrow more than what your current budget is allowing, you may wish to research the possibility of submitting a [consortium agreement](#).
- Still meeting all eligibility requirements as outlined on page 4.

### **Census Date**

We will review your enrollment on the tenth day of classes each semester. This is the Census Date. This is the last day to add or drop classes without any notation on your transcript. It is also the last day to withdraw and receive a full tuition refund. **We will use the number of credits you are enrolled in at the end of the tenth day of classes as your attempted credits with regard to making Satisfactory Academic Progress.**

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**

All students are required to be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP) toward a degree to be eligible for financial aid. SAP consists of two components of measurement: qualitative and quantitative.

The qualitative measure is established by the performance standards of the school or college in which a student is enrolled. The quantitative measures refer to "Pace" and "Timeframe".

### Graduate Student Satisfactory Academic Progress

- Students are required to be making satisfactory "Pace" toward a degree, by passing 1/2 or 50% of the classes in which they are enrolled on the 10<sup>th</sup> day of each semester.
- Students are required to finish their program within a maximum timeframe that cannot exceed 200% of the number of credits required to complete their degree. To determine your timeframe, review your graduate study requirements on the [Graduate School website](#). All credits count in timeframe, even those for which a student did not receive financial aid.

## Thinking of Dropping a Class or Withdrawing Entirely?

### Dropping Classes

Withdrawing from classes may have serious consequences on your financial aid. Before dropping classes or withdrawing from the university, students should consider the following:

- What is the impact on financial aid for the current semester?
- What is the impact for future semesters?
- What are university policies for refunding tuition, housing, meal plan, or other charges?

There are differences between dropping a single class and dropping all of your classes. Before dropping any courses, we encourage you to review the:

[Registrar's Add/Drop Calendar](#)  
[Fees/Tuition Assessed for Drops or Withdrawal](#)  
[Considering Withdrawing?](#)

### If you drop *some* classes:

**The Office of Student Accounts** will determine whether the amount you were charged for tuition should be adjusted, based on the date of withdrawal.

**The Office of Financial Aid Administration** will determine if any aid disbursed to you has to be adjusted. Some financial aid programs are adjusted based on enrollment on the Census Date (10<sup>th</sup> day of the semester). While we generally do not have to adjust aid if you drop a course(s) after the Census Date, your attempted credits for SAP are based on your enrollment on the Census Date, so dropping later will affect your Pace. If you are receiving financial aid, you are strongly encouraged not to drop below half-time enrollment.

**The Registrar's Office** will determine whether the course shows up on your transcript with a 'W' or not at all.

### If you withdraw or drop all of your classes:

**The Office of Student Accounts** will determine whether the amount you were charged for tuition should be adjusted, based on the date of withdrawal. Find more details [here](#).

**The Office of Financial Aid Administration** is required to determine whether any financial aid funds need to be returned to the original funding sources. This is called a "**Return of Title IV**" calculation and

is required in order to be in compliance with Federal regulations. Students do not earn 100% of their aid until after the 60% point of the term. Therefore, if they withdraw, or are dismissed from classes before that, they may have to return some of their aid. For example, at the 50% point in the semester, they have technically only earned 50% of their aid. Unearned funds must be returned to federal, state, and institutional financial aid programs, and in many cases, this will cause the student to owe a balance to the university. If the student needs to repay unearned aid for *non-institutional costs*, our office will contact the student.

The recalculation is rather complex and is based in part on calculating the percentage of aid a student earned. In addition to official withdrawals, if a student fails all of their classes in a semester and the documented evidence shows the student stopped participating prior to the 60% point of the semester, the student's aid eligibility will be recalculated.

If a semester has begun and you are considering withdrawing from classes, you should review additional details about this calculation found on [our website](#). You are also encouraged to speak to an advisor in the Student Financial Service Center before withdrawing to determine how it may affect your financial aid and your Satisfactory Academic Progress.

Students withdrawing from all classes due to medical reasons may want to consult with the Dean of Students Office regarding a possible [Tuition and Fee Appeal](#).

In addition to the possible return of financial aid funds, all students are required to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress toward a degree. "Attempted Credits" for the Timeframe and Pace components of SAP are measured as of the tenth day of classes (the Census date). All courses in which the student was enrolled on the tenth day of classes will be counted as "attempted," no matter what circumstances prompted the withdrawal. If a withdrawal causes a student to fall below the required "Pace" or exceed the maximum Timeframe and become ineligible for aid, students may wish to meet with an advisor in the Student Financial Service Center to discuss the possibility of an appeal. Students are encouraged to review the [Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy](#).

## Student Rights and Responsibilities

As a financial aid recipient, you have rights as well as responsibilities. You can view the complete list [on our website](#).

### The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

This law restricts information university officials can and will provide over the phone and/or to a third party, including parents.

- ✓ If you want us to discuss your financial aid with someone else, you must complete the **Student Consent Release**.
- ✓ If you want to allow others the ability to view specific information in your PAWS account, you must complete **Designate Access**.

You can complete either of these online. After logging into your PAWS Student Center, scroll down to the Personal Information section and select **Student Information Release**. You then have two options. Select **Student Consent Release** to identify people you give permission for staff to discuss your information. Select **Designate Access** to create an account for someone else.

Even with a FERPA release, we cannot share some information. For example, we are not able to release tax information via phone. The Department of Education masks all information imported from the

Internal Revenue Service into the FAFSA. If you or another individual needs this information, you will need to obtain copies of your respective IRS tax return or IRS tax return transcript.

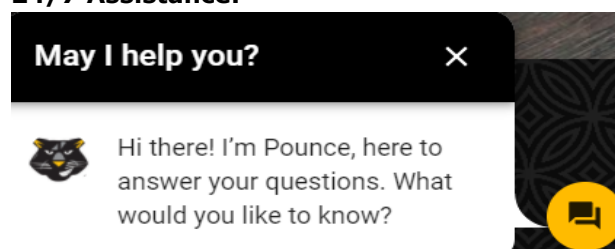
In some cases, we are not able to provide financial aid or FAFSA information to third parties, even with a FERPA release. In those situations, we will complete the information and return it to the student either in person or via mail to the student's permanent address as reported in PAWS.

### [Ways to Reach Us](#)

**Please check our website for current office hours before coming to the office in-person. However, most non-holidays, the office and phone hours are:**

**Monday through Thursday: 9 AM – 4 PM and Fridays: 9 AM – 3 PM**

**24/7 Assistance:**



**Ask Pounce:** Many questions can be answered 24/7 by using "Ask Pounce", our online tool. Ask Pounce your questions about billing, financial aid, and scholarships.

**Email us:** [finances@uwm.edu](mailto:finances@uwm.edu). Please include relevant subject line and Campus ID number.

**Contact Us:** this link sends a preformatted form to our office email account.

For unusual or more complicated issues, you may need to make an appointment. You may [schedule your own appointment](#), or you can ask us for help. When scheduling the appointment, you will be given the option of meeting via phone or TEAMS video chat. We do offer walk-in advising (no appointment necessary) on Wednesdays between 9 AM and 3 PM during weeks when classes are in-session.

If you have any questions or need additional help, please do not hesitate to contact us. We are here to help you.