26-27 CWRU Graduate/Professional Student Financial Aid Handbook

An education at Case Western Reserve University (CWRU) is a strategic investment in your future. This guide is designed to help you navigate the financial aid process, from understanding your costs to receiving your funds under the updated 2026-2027 federal guidelines (including changes implemented by the RISE regulations).

Our Financial Aid Philosophy

Navigating funding is a collaborative process between your academic department and the University Office of Financial Aid, involving the following:

- **Institutional Funding:** Academic departments and professional schools (e.g., Arts & Sciences, Engineering, Law, Medicine, Nursing, Social Work, and Weatherhead School of Management) directly manage and award scholarships, fellowships, and grants by providing a Memo of Assistance (MOA) form to the Office of Financial Aid.
- **Loan Eligibility:** Once institutional funding is determined, the Office of University Financial Aid determines your eligibility for federal and private loans.
- **Support:** If you have questions about specific eligibility or policies, contact the Office of University Financial Aid at financialaid@case.edu or 216-368-4530.

Professional School Financial Aid Contacts

Students enrolled in the following professional schools should first contact their specific financial aid representatives directly to inquire about the aid process and available departmental assistance. All other graduate students (including MA, MS, and PhD students in the School of Graduate Studies) should contact the main Office of University Financial Aid.

Program / School	Email Address	Phone Number
Dental	sodmregistrar@case.edu	216.368.3256
Law	lawmoney@case.edu	216.368.3602
Mandel	mandelfinancialaid@case.edu	216.368.1655
Medicine (including PA and MSA)	medfinancialaid@case.edu	216.368.3666
Nursing	fpbfinaid@case.edu	216.368.0517

Understanding the Cost of Attendance (COA)

The Cost of Attendance (COA) is an estimate of the total cost to attend CWRU for one year. It serves as the legal ceiling for the total financial aid you can receive, no matter the source. Standard components of the COA are below, and a more complete breakdown for graduate students is available on the Graduate/Professional Tuition & Fees website. Additional components, such as childcare expenses, may be considered upon request.

Category	Description	Examples
Costs payable to the school	Billable charges paid directly to CWRU.	Tuition, mandatory fees, and medical plan
Costs payable to others	Estimated out-of-pocket expenses.	Books, supplies, transportation, off-campus housing, and personal expenses.

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Important COA notes:

- ***Costs payable to others estimates are based on typical figures for the greater Cleveland area (or the host city for programs officially based elsewhere) and are non-negotiable set amounts. While the COA can be adjusted for specific program-required expenses, it cannot be adjusted for individual lifestyle choices.***
- ***If your credits change, your COA will be recalculated to reflect your actual enrollment. This includes estimated tuition and any applicable costs payable to others.***

Student Medical Plan

To ensure all students have access to healthcare, CWRU requires a medical plan for anyone enrolled in at least one credit hour.

- **Automatic Enrollment:** You are automatically enrolled in the CWRU Student Medical Plan and charged a fee upon registration for each fall and spring semester at the university.
- **Waivers:** If you have comparable insurance, you may waive this fee through University Health Services. Waivers must be submitted annually by the billing due date.

Eligibility for Federal Financial Aid

To qualify for federal student loans, you must be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident and meet the following criteria:

- Hold a high school diploma or recognized equivalent (GED).
- Be admitted to and enrolled in an eligible degree or certificate program.
- Maintain a valid Social Security number.
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP), which includes maintaining a minimum GPA and a minimum completion rate of attempted credits.
- Enroll at least half-time.
- Submit a valid FAFSA each year that, among other items, will confirm
    - That you are not in default on previous federal loans
    - That you do not owe a refund on federal grants
    - That you do have remaining loan eligibility

Application Process

Students must complete the following to have their federal financial aid eligibility determined:

1. Submit the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) using **school code 003137.**
    a. No other code is valid.
2. Submit the CWRU Financial Aid Form from your My Financial Aid portal
3. Have any remaining documentation listed on the Documents & Messages section of your portal submitted to Financial Aid. Including, but not limited to:
    a. The Memo of Assistance (MOA), a form initiated and submitted by your academic department that details any assistance they may be providing. They start submitting that information later in the spring semester and continue throughout the academic year.
    b. Proof of Citizenship
    c. Proof of Identity
    d. Unusual Enrollment History
    e. Verification Forms

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Your Financial Aid Offer

Offers are determined and valid for one academic year only. You must take action in your My Financial Aid portal, including accepting, declining, or reducing your aid, as well as completing any outstanding documents, before your aid can be applied to your university account. Failure to do so may jeopardize your ability to receive aid for a given term. Financial Aid offers are typically sent to students for the full academic year, using the following schedule:

- By the end of May, for students starting their academic year in the summer semester
- By the end of July, for students starting their academic year in the fall semester
- In January, for students starting their academic year in the spring semester

Types and Amounts of Student Loans

If scholarships and grants do not cover your full COA, you may utilize:

- **Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans:** Interest accrues immediately upon disbursement. You may choose to pay interest while in school or have it added to your total loan balance.
- **Private Student Loans:** Credit-based loans from private lenders that must be applied for separately. Terms, interest rates, and repayment options vary by lender. CWRU provides a list of preferred lenders via ELMSelect to use as a starting point for your search.

Borrowing Limits as of 2026-2027

Grade Level	Annual Limit	Aggregate Limit (post-undergraduate only)	Lifetime Limit - All loans (total education, includes Grad PLUS)
Graduate	$20,500	$100,000	$257,500
Professional (DMD, JD, MD)	$50,000	$200,000	$257,500

Borrowing Limits as of 2026-2027 for Legacy Borrowers

As of July 1, 2026, federal borrowing limits have been revised for all but legacy students. Legacy status is granted to those who received a federal direct loan disbursement for their current CWRU program prior to this date. Students starting a new program or degree (including transfers from other institutions) or experiencing a break in their enrollment on or after July 1, 2026, will be subject to the updated loan limits.

Legacy students are granted an "interim exception" to continue under the previous loan limits (listed below) for the lesser of:

- ***Three academic years***
- ***The end of their published program length***
- ***Until they have completed their degree or are no longer enrolled***

Legacy Grade Level	*Legacy Annual Limit*	*Grad PLUS eligibility*	*Legacy Lifetime Limit (does not include Grad PLUS)*
Graduate	***$20,500***	***Remaining cost up to COA***	***$138,500***
Health Professional (DMD, MD, Clinical Psych PhD)	***up to $47,167***	***Remaining cost up to COA***	***$224,000***

Additional Required Documentation

The aid you accept or decline, as well as prior decisions (if applicable) will determine what additional documentation may be required. In general, federal loans will require the following:

- Entrance Counseling - The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) process of ensuring you know your rights and responsibilities regarding your loans.
  - This must be completed once per academic career.
- Promissory Note - The document that ensures you are agreeing to take out your loan and to repay them later
  - Depending on the loan, it must typically be completed once (federal loans) or annually (private loans)

Coordination of External Resources

The Office of University Financial Aid encourages students to explore all available sources of support. Under federal regulations, the office must coordinate all types of funding a student receives. For a graduate student, this process ensures that total aid does not exceed the student's official COA.

The type, amount, and timing of outside resources a student receives may require adjustments to their existing financial aid offer. Students who wish to maintain eligibility for student loans should notify the Office of University Financial Aid in writing as soon as they become aware of any additional resources they have accepted or received. Examples of external resources include, but are not limited to:

- Outside Scholarships
- Tuition Benefits
- Veteran's Benefits

How and When will you Receive your Financial Aid?

Each student has a university account managed by the Office of Student Financial Services. This account houses billing and payment information. Students can access their account through the Student Information System and detailed instructions are available in the SIS Financial Guide.

- **Disbursement Timing:** Student loans will start to be paid to your university account on a staggered schedule.
  - Summer payments will start on June 12 for classes that have already started and the first day of class for those that start later
  - Fall and spring payments will start on the first day of class
  - After initial payments have been made, additional payments will continue throughout the semester
    - Federal loans will be paid on Wednesdays
    - Private external loans will be paid on Fridays
- **Payment:** Aid is applied directly to your university charges (tuition, fees, etc.).
  - By federal regulation, you must complete the Excess Aid Permission process in SIS if you want your federal aid to cover non-educational charges such as the Student Medical Plan, parking permits, or the One to One Fitness fees.
- **Refunds:** If your financial aid exceeds your billable charges, the surplus is refunded to you for living expenses. Refunds are processed within two weeks via direct deposit or mailed check.

Refund Example: If your loans total $40,000 but your tuition is $30,000, you will receive a $10,000 "refund" for living expenses. Remember that this is still a loan. Only accept the amount you need to cover your expenses to keep your future debt low.

Schedule of Reduction (SOR) - new as of 2026-2027

As part of the federal RISE Regulations, all federal student loans are now subject to proration based on your enrollment intensity (the number of credits you take relative to a full-time course load). For most CWRU graduate programs, loan eligibility is calculated based on a two-semester academic year (Fall and Spring). Your maximum loan offer is determined by your enrollment status.

If you drop below your originally reported credit level after your loan has already been paid to your account, you should expect the following to occur:

- If the change in credits is reflected on your transcript (e.g., you drop from 9 to 6 credits before the end of the drop period), your loan eligibility must be recalculated.
- Any "excess" loan funds already disbursed must be returned to the U.S. Department of Education.
    - For students enrolling only in the fall semester, the return process will begin immediately upon notification to Financial Aid that enrollment has decreased and may result in a balance due to the university.
    - For students continuing into the spring semester, we will typically apply any required reduction to the upcoming spring disbursement.
- Students are expected to promptly notify Financial Aid of any increases in enrollment if they wish to have loan funds reinstated.

Example: Management Student (Full-time at 9 credits)
If this student was expected to enroll in 9 credits, but instead enrolls in 6 credits for fall (two-thirds of a full load), their $10,250 semester unsubsidized loan would be reduced to $6,836. The remaining $3,414 will be handled based on their spring plans.

- ***If the student will not be enrolling in spring, the reduction will take effect immediately, likely resulting in a balance on the student's university account if the original funds were already paid.***
- ***If the student plans to enroll in 9 credits in the spring semester, the difference of $3,414 will be deducted from their spring loan amount so that no immediate balance is created.***
- ***If the student plans to increase their spring enrollment to 12 credits, offsetting the 3-credit drop in fall (keeping an 18-credit enrollment for the academic year), no change to their loan will be required.***