Graduate & Professional Students

The One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3), passed by congress, and effective July 1, 2026, has significant implications for federal student loans. OB3 creates new loan limits and changes the types of loans available to borrowers.

As part of the bill, some programs are defined as graduate programs, and some are defined as professional programs. This distinction is important because professional students are eligible for higher annual borrowing limits than graduate students due to the increased costs associated with their programs.

Professional Student Programs

The following University of Akron programs are currently included on the U.S. Department of Education's temporary list of approved professional programs:

Program of Study	CIP Code	College
Adult Gerontological Health Nursing, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Adult/Gerontological, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Applied Politics - Law - Full-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Applied Politics - Law - Part-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Audiology, AUD	51.0202 - Audiology/Audiologist.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Business Administration - Law - Full-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Business Administration - Law - Part-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Child and Adolescent Health Nurse Practitioner - Primary Care, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Child and Adolescent Health Nurse Practitioner - Primary Care, MSN	51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Child and Adolescent Health Nurse Practitioner - Primary/Acute Care, MSN	51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Child/Adolescent Acute Care Nurse Practitioner, MSN	51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Child/Adolescent Acute Care, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Child/Adolescent Primary/Acute Care, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences

Family Nurse Practitioner Track, MSN	51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Financial Forensics - Law - Full-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Financial Forensics - Law - Part-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Law - Full-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Law - Part-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Nurse Anesthesia, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Nursing Practice, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Nursing Service Administration, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Nursing Service Administration, MSN	51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Psychiatric Family Nurse Practitioner, DNP	51.3818 - Nursing Practice.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Psychiatric Mental Health Nurse Practitioner, MSN	51.3801 - Registered Nursing/Registered Nurse.	College of Health and Human Sciences
Taxation - Law - Full-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law
Taxation - Law - Part-Time, JD	22.0101 - Law.	School of Law

Graduate Student Programs

All graduate-level programs not listed above will be considered graduate programs for the purposes of federal student loan regulations.

Elimination of the Graduate PLUS Loan

The One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3) eliminates the Graduate PLUS Loan for new borrowers beginning July 1, 2026. However, current students may continue to borrow under **legacy provisions** if they meet certain eligibility requirements.

Students who borrowed any type of Federal Direct Loan for their current academic program before July 1, 2026, may continue to:

- Borrow a Graduate PLUS Loan up to their cost of attendance, minus other financial aid (such as scholarships and Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loans).
- Remain subject to the annual and aggregate federal loan limits that were in effect before the OB3 changes.

- Continue borrowing under these legacy provisions until they either complete their current degree program or for up to three academic years beginning July 1, 2026, whichever occurs first.
- Once a student completes their degree or reaches the end of the three-academic-year legacy period, Graduate PLUS Loan eligibility ends. If the student has not completed their program by that time, they will become subject to the federal loan eligibility rules that took effect on July 1, 2026, and will no longer be eligible to borrow a Graduate PLUS Loan.

New Borrowers

Students who are new federal student loan borrowers on or after July 1, 2026, are subject to the federal loan provisions established under the One Big Beautiful Bill (OB3).

- Graduate PLUS Loans have been eliminated. New borrowers are not eligible to receive Federal Direct Graduate PLUS Loans.
- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan annual limits: Eligible students may borrow up to $20,500 per year for graduate programs or up to $50,000 per year for professional programs through the Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan Program, subject to federal eligibility requirements.
- Financial aid cannot exceed the cost of attendance. The total amount of financial aid you receive, including scholarships, grants, and student loans—may not exceed the University's established cost of attendance.
- New borrower status is determined by academic program**.** Students who previously borrowed federal loans for a different academic program and later enroll in a new program will be considered new borrowers for the new program.

Loan Proration

Students who enroll less than full-time are subject to **loan proration**. This means you will receive a reduced loan amount based on your enrollment level rather than the full annual loan limit available to full-time students.

This is a change from previous practice. In the past, students enrolled at least half-time could generally borrow up to the maximum annual loan limit, provided they did not exceed their cost of attendance. Beginning with the new loan rules, your annual loan eligibility will be prorated based on your exact enrollment level.

Borrowing Limits for Professional Students with Legacy Provisions

Students who borrowed any type of Federal Direct Loan for their current academic program before July 1, 2026, are considered legacy borrowers.

Loan Type	Annual Borrowing Limit	Lifetime Borrowing Limit
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	$20,500	$138,500 (includes all undergraduate and graduate loans)
Graduate PLUS Loan	Up to Cost of Attendance (COA) minus other financial aid.	No Limit (until completion of current degree program or up to three academic years beginning July 1, 2026, whichever occurs first)

Borrowing Limits for Professional Students Who Are New Borrowers on or After July 1, 2026

Loan Type	Annual Borrowing Limit	Lifetime Borrowing Limit
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	$50,000	$200,000 (does not include undergraduate loans)
Graduate PLUS Loan	Not Eligible	Not Eligible

Borrowing Limits for Graduate Students with Legacy Provisions

Students who borrowed any type of Federal Direct Loan for their current academic program before July 1, 2026, are considered legacy borrowers.

Loan Type	Annual Borrowing Limit	Lifetime Borrowing Limit
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	$20,500	$138,500 (includes all undergraduate and graduate loans)
Graduate PLUS Loan	Up to Cost of Attendance (COA) minus other financial aid.	No Limit (until completion of current degree program or up to three academic years beginning July 1, 2026, whichever occurs first)

Borrowing Limits for Graduate Students Who Are New Borrowers on or After July 1, 2026

Loan Type	Annual Borrowing Limit	Lifetime Borrowing Limit
Unsubsidized Direct Loan	$20,500	$100,000 (does not include undergraduate loans)
Graduate PLUS Loan	Not Eligible	Not Eligible

Examples

NEW BORROWER:

Michael will begin enrollment in the MBA program in fall 2026. He is a new student in the program and therefore has not borrowed federal direct loans in that program prior to July 1, 2026. Michael is considered a new borrower and is subject to the new rules under OB3.

Michael's estimated tuition and fees (including Akron fee, course fees, and direct loan fees) is $11,770 for the academic year (fall and spring semesters) and is based on full-time enrollment of nine credits.

Michael borrows the Unsubsidized Direct Loan in the amount of $20,500. This amount will be divided equally between fall and spring semesters, at $10,250 per semester. This will cover Michael's tuition and fees each semester, leaving approximately $4,365 each semester to help with other education-related expenses.

If Michael decides to enroll in the summer semester, he will need to pay personally or perhaps borrow private student loans. He may also borrow less from the Unsubsidized Direct Loan during fall and spring, thus saving the remaining amount to borrow in the summer. He may also borrow the maximum Unsubsidized Direct Loan over fall and spring and save the remaining refund so that he can pay personally for summer.

BORROWER WITH LEGACY PROVISIONS:

Mary began year two of the Nurse Anesthesia (DNP) program in summer 2026. During her first year in the program, she borrowed the Unsubsidized Direct Loan and the Graduate PLUS Loan. Mary is considered a legacy borrower as she continues through her program.

Because Mary is eligible for legacy provisions, she may continue to borrow the Unsubsidized Direct Loan for up to $20,500 annually. She may also continue to borrow the Graduate PLUS loan for any other expenses up to the cost of attendance, minus her other financial aid.

Mary has **three academic years** (summer, fall, and spring) beginning July 1, 2026, to complete her degree and still be eligible for the legacy provisions. If she doesn't complete her program within the three years, her eligibility will revert to the rules for a new borrower, and she may no longer receive the Graduate PLUS Loan.

Examples (continued)

BORROWER WITH LEGACY PROVISIONS (Part-Time):

Zac is a continuing borrower who began his graduate program in Fall 2025 and is enrolled **part-time**. Even though he is attending part-time, because he borrowed a Direct Unsubsidized Loan during the 2025–26 academic year, he qualifies for the legacy provisions. As a result, he remains eligible to borrow both the Direct Unsubsidized Loan and, if needed, the Graduate PLUS Loan for up to **three additional academic years**. The three-year legacy period begins on July 1, 2026. Here is the timeline:

Academic Year	Period Enrolled	Legacy Status
2025-26	Year 1	N/A
2026-27	Year 2	Year 1
2027-28	Year 3	Year 2
2028-29	Year 4	Year 3
2029-30	Year 5	Expired

Because Zac is attending part-time, he might not complete his degree within the three-year limit on legacy provisions for the Graduate PLUS Loan. If Zac's legacy provision expires, he will revert to the new rules under OB3 that are effective July 1, 2026, from the expiration date of the legacy provisions and going forward, meaning he may still borrow the Unsubsidized Direct Loan, but the Graduate PLUS Loan is no longer available to him.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is a legacy Borrow for student loan purposes?

- A legacy borrower is an active borrower who borrowed any federal student loan while in their current program prior to July 1, 2026. Legacy borrowers have access to the Graduate PLUS Loan in addition to the Unsubsidized Direct Loan.

How long do I have to finish my program and still be eligible for the legacy provisions?

- Active borrowers are only eligible for the legacy provisions for a limited time. You have three academic years (fall, spring, summer semesters) starting July 1, 2026, to borrow under the legacy provisions. If you do not finish your program within three academic years, you will lose your legacy provision and no longer be able to borrow the Graduate PLUS Loan.

What happens if I change my program after July1, 2026?

- Changing your program will result in the loss of your legacy provisions. Loan limits and eligibility rules will shift to those of a new borrower, even if you previously qualified as an active (legacy) borrower in your old program.

I'm transferring to Akron in fall 26 or later, what is my loan eligibility?

- If you are an incoming transfer student, you'll be subject to the new loan rules under OB3 and considered a new borrower, even if you had loan at your previous school.

Will taking classes part-time reduce the amount I can borrow?

- Yes, under new OB3 rules, your loan eligibility is adjusted based on your enrollment level. If you drop below full-time enrollment, your available loan may be prorated, even if you were eligible for the full amount in the past before the passing of OB3.

I'm taking courses on a part-time basis. When do my legacy provisions expire?

- Legacy provisions are capped at three years from July 1, 2026, regardless of whether you are enrolled part-time or full-time. This means that even if you enroll part-time, the maximum protected period that you can still borrow the Graduate PLUS Loan is three academic years. Other loan opportunities from private lenders may be available if you may no longer borrow Graduate PLUS Loans.

Since the Graduate PLUS Loan is being phased out, what options will students have to cover remaining costs?

- Students may need to consider private student loans to help cover remaining costs. Information can be found on our **Fast Choice** webpage. Private student loans are credit-based and may have variable interest rates. Review the loan terms carefully before you apply.

Who should I contact with questions about my student loan eligibility?

- Please contact the Office of Student Financial Aid at 330-972-7032, or by email at finaid@uakron.edu. Walk in visitors are welcome throughout the day between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. No appointment is needed.

Office of Student Financial Aid, 07/13/2026