



Funding Your MA Degree

Columbia University Graduate School of Arts and Sciences

Spring 2026

Presented by GSAS Office of Financial Aid

Today's Session

- Introduction
- Cost of Attendance
 - Registration and Enrollment Categories
- Funding Types
 - Fellowships, Employment, Loans
- Timing and Next Steps
 - Admitted MA Financial Aid Timeline
- Q & A



Welcome to Columbia – Your People

- Departmental Contacts
 - MA Program Director
 - DAAF – Director of Academic Administration and Finance
 - DGS – Director of Graduate Studies

[MA Departmental Contact List](#)

- Financial Aid
- SFS – Student Financial Services
- Also Student Affairs, Compass, Writing Center, and other offices throughout Columbia...

Cost of Attendance (COA)

Direct Costs

Tuition and Fees

Health Insurance

Generally these costs are the same for all students in a program.

Indirect Costs

Living Expenses

Books and Supplies

The Cost of Attendance creates a budgeted amount for these costs but your individual expenses may vary.



<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/cost-attendance>

Cost of Attendance (COA)

<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/cost-attendance>

➤ [Tuition for Master's Programs](#)

➤ Fees

➤ Indirect Expenses

All Other Master's Programs

Registration Category: All Other Programs and students in Statistics, Mathematics of Finance, QMSS and Biotechnology who entered prior to Fall 2013

Per Semester

Residence Unit (less than or equal to 20 points) Students who register for more than 20 points will be charged \$36,727 + \$2,468 per point, for each point beyond 20 points.

Extended Residence \$13,980

Half Residence Unit (three or fewer courses) \$19,906



[2025-2026 MA Estimated Billing Calculator](#) - tool to assist in determining direct costs, 2026-2027 available May

Note: Extended Residence is for continuing students who have already completed the required 2 Full Residence Units.

Registration and Enrollment Categories

- In addition to courses, you must register for an Enrollment Category each semester.
 - **A total of two Residence Units are required for your MA**
 - International Students: Student visas require full-time enrollment
 - A student who is registered for a full Residence Unit (“RU”) may enroll in four or more courses.
 - Please note that additional tuition is charged per point if registered for more than 20 points per semester.
 - A student who is registered for a half Residence Unit may enroll in up to three courses.

Your Enrollment Category impacts your tuition charge, fees, and your overall COA. If you have aid, and are planning a change to your enrollment, reach out to our office to understand any impact to your eligibility.



<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/residence-unit-and-other-enrollment-categories>

<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/ma-registration>

Estimated COA Example* - Direct Costs

Direct Costs**	Fall 2026	Spring 2027
Tuition	\$37,829	\$37,829
Student Services & Support Fee	\$710	\$710
Student Activity Fee	\$48	\$48
Health Services Fee	\$752	\$752
Health Insurance***	\$2,248	\$3,655
Document Fee (one-time, 1 st semester)	\$105	
Total Estimated Direct Costs by Semester	\$41,692	\$42,994

Total Estimated Direct Costs
\$84,686

**Direct charges that are NOT included but may be assessed: ISSO Fee (\$175/semester), Rent (monthly), Dining Plans (varies), Other course fees (based on course enrollment)

***May be waived if you have comparable coverage, waiver process available in July

[2025-2026 MA Estimated Billing Calculator](#)



*Assumptions: Student is U.S. citizen, enrolling in Human Rights, Full RU each semester, FA/SP 26-27; example is for demonstration purposes only. Tuition finalized in June.

Estimated COA Example* - Indirect Costs

Budgeted Indirect Costs**	Fall 2026	Spring 2027
Housing	\$7,600	\$9,500
Food	\$3,728	\$4,660
Personal Expenses	\$1,616	\$2,020
Books and Supplies	\$645	\$645
Transportation	\$604	\$755
Total Estimated Indirect Costs by Semester	\$14,193	\$17,580

Total Estimated Indirect Budget
\$31,773

**Additional costs that are included if applicable: Federal Direct Unsubsidized Loan fees

Total Estimated COA
\$116,459



*Assumptions: Student is U.S. citizen, enrolling in Human Rights, Full RU each semester, FA/SP 26-27, example is for demonstration purposes only.

Funding Types – Institutional Fellowships

- Department ([MA Departmental Contact List](#))
 - Availability and amounts vary across departments and are limited
 - Many notified with letter of admission, some shifting may happen
- GSAS
 - Opportunities announced as applications become available
- Columbia University
 - Interschool Fellowships (Application opens late April, Deadline June)
 - Dolores Zohrab Liebmann Fellowship (Application opens early December)
 - Office of the Provost: <https://provost.columbia.edu/content/awards-fellowships-and-rfps>
 - Institutes and Centers

Funding Types – External Fellowships

- Site to find/search/explore

- <https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/external-fellowships>

- Upcoming Fellowship and Award Opportunities

- <https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/upcoming-fellowship-and-award-opportunities>



- Missed Opportunities

- Affinity Groups

Funding Types – Work Opportunities

- Federal Work-Study (U.S. Citizens/Permanent Residents)
 - Must complete FAFSA and demonstrate “need” to qualify, base award split evenly across Fall and Spring, initial award \$3,000
 - May request an increase if fully utilized, eligibility remains, and funds are available
 - Financial Aid applies funds to your record but does not manage job opportunities or pay
 - More Information: <https://sfs.columbia.edu/content/federal-work-study-program>
- Departmental Research Assistant (DRA), Reader
 - Coordinated with faculty and your department
 - Opportunities may be competitive, limited
 - Self-identify early to your department

Funding Types – Loan Basics

- Can apply for full academic year (Fall and Spring) or each semester
 - Can apply at any time if financial plans change*
- Not need-based for graduate students
- Interest accrues from the date of disbursement on the disbursed amount 
- Can reduce loans if financial situation changes 
 - Return within 120-days from disbursement on federal loans = 0% fee + 0% interest on returned amount
- Encourage you to only borrow what you need

Funding Types – Loan Options (U.S. Citizens/PR)

➤ Federal Direct Unsubsidized

- No credit check, complete the FAFSA to apply
- Maximum \$20,500 per academic year, less 1.057% fee (net amount \$10,142/semester)*
- NEW: Maximum lifetime aggregate limit for graduate borrowing is \$100,000
 - Aggregate borrowing limit excludes undergraduate borrowing but includes all prior graduate/professional borrowing
- NEW: Eligibility will be pro-rated based on less than full-time enrollment (12 credits)
 - If you want to access the maximum amount you must enroll in and maintain 12 or more credits each semester.
 - Reducing enrollment may result in a balance that you must return or decreased eligibility in a subsequent semester.
 - You must enroll in and maintain at least 6 credits to be eligible for federal aid and the credits must be *required for your degree completion*.
- Current fixed interest rate of 7.94%, rate of loan is based on date of first disbursement*
- <https://sfs.columbia.edu/content/changes-2026-2027-federal-student-loans>



*Federal loan interest rates are adjusted every July 1; fees are adjusted every October 1. Rates for next academic year are typically announced by mid-May. Interest rate and fee are based on date of first disbursement. Borrowers have the right to select the lender of their choice. Columbia cannot recommend any specific lender but does maintain a suggested lender list available here: <https://sfs.columbia.edu/financial-aid/private-loans>

Funding Types – Loan Options (U.S. Citizens/PR)

➤ Private Educational Loans*

- Interest rate may be fixed or variable and may be tied to repayment plan
- Most lenders have tiered rate structure based on credit scoring
- Fees vary, most are added to the principal
- Consider a credit-worthy cosigner
- Can borrow up to the COA less other aid subject to lender approval
- **TOO SOON TO APPLY** 2026-2027 lender products anticipated no earlier than late April
- <https://sfs.columbia.edu/content/private-loans>

All graduate loan types :

Interest accrues from the date of disbursement on the disbursed amount.



*Borrowers have the right to select the lender of their choice. Columbia cannot recommend any specific lender but does maintain a suggested lender list available here: <https://sfs.columbia.edu/financial-aid/private-loans>

Funding Types – Loan Options (International)

➤ Home Country

- Government
- Local Bank
 - Student line of credit

➤ Private

- More options with a U.S. Citizen/Permanent Resident credit-worthy cosigner
- Cosigner release
- Interest rate may be fixed or variable and may be tied to repayment plan
- Most lenders have tiered rate structure
- Can borrow up to the financial aid budget less other aid (unless limited by lender)

➤ No-Cosigner Options

- [Prodigy Finance](#)
- [MPower Financing](#)
- We encourage international students considering no-cosigner loan options to begin the application process with your selected lender(s) early (March/April)
- The approval letter from lender is typically all that is needed for including a loan in the financial sources for your I-20 application.



Timing and Next Steps

- Fellowships
 - Check online resources. Reach out to your Department. [MA Departmental Contact List](#)
- Determine your borrowing needs – Loan Information Session in July (date TBD)
 - Utilize billing calculator to help you determine your costs and borrowing needs based on your program
- Jump Start Options
 - Federal borrowers can complete FAFSA, Entrance Counseling, and Master Promissory Note(s) at any time
 - If you want to maximize eligibility in the Direct Unsubsidized loan you must enroll and maintain 12 or more credits each semester of enrollment
 - If you have already borrowed federal loans at the graduate or professional level, your eligibility may be reduced
 - Private loan borrowers should complete an application directly with the lender of their choice in mid-late April at the earliest.
 - Check your credit report and resolve any delinquencies as soon as possible – private loan eligibility is primarily credit-based
- Financial Aid will begin processing fall loans in May *at the earliest*

Timing and Next Steps

- First billing notifications for Fall emailed mid-August, due in mid-September
- Loan and Billing Information Session in August (date TBD)
- SFS billing schedule: <https://sfs.columbia.edu/content/billing-schedule>
 - If borrowing or receiving institutional aid it should appear as anticipated credits
 - Your tuition deposit is applied to Fall (housing deposit, too)
 - Payment plan options will be available in July: <https://www.sfs.columbia.edu/pay-plan>
- Make sure you've cleared all holds
 - **August 1 Final Transcript Deadline** – *if you have not submitted your official, final transcripts to Admissions by this date you will have a hold placed on your record that will prevent registration*
 - **August 1 Deferral Deadline**
 - **Immunization Requirements** – *do this NOW! Students who have not completed the immunization requirements will have a hold on their record preventing registration*
 - **Prior Columbia Holds** – *review your account in Vergil to ensure you have resolved any holds from prior degrees*

Timing and Next Steps

- Don't forget an Enrollment Category when you register! *Every. Single. Semester.*
 - No Enrollment Category means you're not officially a student (no access to campus resources/health insurance/refunds)
 - My bill doesn't have any tuition charges. You didn't register for an enrollment category.
 - My financial aid hasn't disbursed yet and classes have begun. You didn't register for an enrollment category.
 - I'm registered for a full load of classes but I still haven't received my refund. You didn't register for an enrollment category.
 - Federal aid, including Federal Work-Study, requires a minimum of 6 credits of enrollment – but you must enroll in and maintain at least 12 credits to be eligible for consideration of the maximum amount of \$20,500
- Your People
 - Make a plan. When plans change, reach out.



GRADUATE SCHOOL
OF ARTS AND SCIENCES
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

Q&A

Email: gsas-finaid@columbia.edu

Meet with Us – virtual and in-person drop-ins, one-on-one

<https://www.gsas.columbia.edu/content/gsas-financial-aid-appointment-scheduler>