

## Checklist for Managing Your Student Loans

### Find all of your loans

- **Federal (Direct, Grad Plus, Perkins) loans** and the name of your loan servicer here: [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov) where you can view your Aid Summary from the Dashboard – which you can open under your profile name at the top after signing in.
  - **The loan servicer's website is your primary management tool.**
- **Institutional loans** such as a University Loan, Perkins, HPSL, LDS, are managed here: <https://heartland.ecsi.net>.
- **Private loans**, consumer debt will report information to the Credit Bureaus: [www.annualcreditreport.com](http://www.annualcreditreport.com).

### When will you need to start repayment?

- Loans will need to go through their grace period – and you will communicate your choice of repayment plan near the end of your grace period, see below.

### Think about choosing a repayment plan that makes sense now (you can change plans in the future)

- Income-Driven repayment plans generally offer the lowest payment, and are qualifying payments for Public Service Loan Forgiveness.
- A Federal consolidation can make Perkins and HHS Loans eligible for the income-driven plans and their benefits.
- It is important to begin paying now, if hoping for Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF). See our page with tips: <https://finaid.ucsf.edu/financial-literacy/debt-management/public-service-loan-forgiveness>
- *Use the Department of Education's Loan Simulator to see what repayment for your federal loans will be like under all the available plans using current income/future expected incomes <https://studentaid.gov/loan-simulator>*

### If necessary, investigate postponement options.

<https://studentaid.ed.gov/repay-loans/deferment-forbearance>

- Residency status does not qualify for Deferment on Federal loans, however, some Institutional loans (the ones serviced by Heartland ECI) allow for Deferment during Residency.
- Fellowships may qualify you for Deferment using the [Fellowship Deferment Form](#).
- Forbearance can be pursued during Residency or times of economic hardship – but interest will continue to accrue.

### Should you consolidate (Federal consolidation)?

- Not everyone needs to consolidate, and there are pros and cons for each student's situation.
- Contrary to some websites and companies that may tell you this: consolidation is not a necessary step to qualifying for forgiveness programs if all of your loans are Direct Loans.
- Be aware: If you consolidate *after* making some payments toward your Direct Loans, the PSLF count of on-time payments is reset and begins again!
- *Pros:* Multiple servicers and payments can be made easier, can make FFEL, Perkins, HPL and LDS eligible for Income Driven Repayment plans and PSLF. *Cons:* may lose benefits of some loans with longer grace and/or extended deferment options, cannot target payments later to highest interest rate first since the new consolidation loan carries one rate, the weighted average interest rate is rounded up to nearest 1/8 of 1% (may add to cost). Federal Student Loan consolidation on-line application is easy and is at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov) under "Consolidate My Loans"

### Should you consolidate with a private lender?

- Private lenders are anxious to buy your debt because you are a good risk, and they want you as a customer for other financial products they will offer (such as home loans).
- Private loans do not qualify for the federal income-driven repayment plans or Public Service Loan Forgiveness.
- Terms and conditions are all set by the lender; you must read the fine print and be sure you understand they will make you an individual offer of interest rate either fixed or variable; it might not be the one on the "as low as" statement on their literature.
- Federal debt is discharged in cases of death and disability; will the private debt?

### Make student loan repayment part of your overall financial plan and your budget

- Consider all of your debt, including credit cards and other consumer debt and pay higher interest rate debt most aggressively.
- Be sure to save for the unexpected expenses and opportunities by building a savings account and/or a Roth IRA.
- Save money by signing up for direct debit to qualify for interest rate discounts on repayment of Direct Loans.
- If you are in an Income-Driven Repayment plan for your Federal loans, be sure to calendar the annual recertification date so that you don't experience unexpected interest capitalization.
- If married, be sure you understand the implications of married filing jointly vs. married filing separately on student loan payments vs. your tax liability <https://studentaid.gov/manage-loans/repayment/plans/income-driven/questions#married-borrowers>