

Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF)

BACKGROUND

The Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program was established in 2007 as part of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) and was designed to encourage student loan borrowers to enter and remain in the public non-profit sector for at least ten years with the promise to forgive any remaining federal student loan debt at that time tax free (for federal tax purposes). PSLF is neither discipline nor degree specific, and thus applies to all student loan borrowers who meet the eligibility requirements.

ELIGIBILITY

You do NOT have to consolidate to be eligible for PSLF.

The basic eligibility requirements for PSLF are not complicated, and they have not changed, even with the changes and improvements to the program made in 2022 by the Biden Administration. To qualify for PSLF, a borrower must:

1. **Make 10 years' worth of qualifying payments with an eligible repayment plan such as SAVE (Saving on a Valuable Education) or IBR (Income Based Repayment).** You MUST at some point use an Income Driven Repayment (IDR) plan to qualify. Payments do not have to be consecutive nor from the same IDR, and the payment clock for PSLF does NOT reset should a borrower switch IDRs.
2. **Payments must be made on Federal Direct Loans** (these are loans directly from the government). Therefore, if your loan does not say Direct, it is not eligible for PSLF. The government cannot forgive loans it did not make. Once again, you do NOT have to consolidate to qualify for PSLF.
3. **Payments with an eligible plan on Direct Loans must be made while working full time (now defined as 30 hours per week) for an eligible non-profit employer.** The employment does not have to be consecutive, and it does not have to be from the same employer, and the payment clock for PSLF does NOT reset should you switch eligible employers.

Please note that while the payments do not have to be consecutive and the employment does not have to be consecutive, the PSLF "clock" is not moving towards eligibility unless all three of these things are happening at the same time. This is why it may take some borrowers more than 10 years to qualify.

STEPS TO SET UP PSLF ELIGIBILITY

1. **Complete the PSLF Form available at www.StudentAid.gov/publicservice.** This can be completed once a borrower starts working full time for an eligible employer.
2. **We strongly suggest you use the PSLF Help Tool available at the above site when completing the PSLF Form.** This allows you to confirm your employer is a non-profit, preprint the form, and submit it electronically to your employer for their signature.
3. **Please note that effective May 1, 2024, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) took over PSLF processing and MOHELA is no longer the designated PSLF servicer.** This means you do not have to move your loans from your current servicer to MOHELA if you are interested in PSLF, since ED is now processing all PSLF Forms.

IMPORTANT COMMENTS ON PSLF

Please note the following:

1. **Once again, you do NOT have to consolidate to qualify for PSLF.**
2. The PSLF Form is not a contract, it is simply a way of letting the government know you are interested in PSLF and that you want help tracking your qualifying payments so that you always know how far along you are towards forgiveness with PSLF.
3. While the PSLF Form is not required, it is the only way to track your payments and the only way the government knows you are interested in the program. We STRONGLY encourage you to submit the PSLF Form every year you are working for an eligible employer.
4. Once again, the PSLF Form can now be done online by using the PSLF Help Tool at www.StudentAid.gov/publicservice.
5. While there were some decided challenges with PSLF when the program first started, many of these have been addressed and borrowers are now qualifying and have been for years.
6. The extremely high denial rate for the first groups of borrowers who applied for forgiveness was due in large part to a) borrowers applying for forgiveness on loans the government did not make and b) borrowers applying for forgiveness when they were using the wrong repayment plans. This was largely addressed with the temporary PSLF Waiver put in place by the Biden Administration in 2022.
7. The forgiveness amount with PSLF is not considered taxable income for federal tax purposes, though state tax provisions may be different.
8. **Lastly, we encourage you to watch for updates on PSLF that may result from the 2024 election results.**

Fall Winter 2024