POSTGRADUATE DOCTORAL LOAN

Student Finance England (SFE) relates to English domiciled students studying higher education courses at universities or colleges in the UK

sfe
student finance england

An Introduction

A Postgraduate Doctoral Loan is funding to contribute towards course AND living costs whilst studying a postgraduate doctoral course (such as a PhD). It's paid directly to you, and is not based on your income or the income of your household. Unlike undergraduate loans there is no separate sum paid to the university; you have to pay your tuition fees to the university directly.

Course and Personal Eligibility

The course that you intend to study must be at an eligible university or college in the UK (or in England if you are an EU national with pre-settled status) and be a full, standalone postgraduate doctoral course leading to a qualification such as a subject specialist doctorate, integrated subject specialist doctorate or professional and practice-based doctorates. A Postgraduate Doctoral Loan is not available to students wanting to 'top up' a lower-level qualification to a Doctoral degree. Nor is it available to students' studying courses that are not full standalone Doctoral courses (like Postgraduate Certificates, Postgraduate Diploma or Postgraduate master's courses) or courses that are funded with the undergraduate support package like PGCE courses, most NHS courses and undergraduate integrated master's courses.

Your course must last between three and eight years and can be studied on a full-time or part-time basis.

Nationality and Residency

If you are a UK or Irish Citizen, – or have settled status under the EU Settlement Scheme or indefinite leave to remain with no restrictions on how long you can stay, you could be eligible to receive the loan. The same eligibility criteria as undergraduate funding applies. Usually, they should have 3 years ordinary residency in England prior to starting the course (not always needed with some immigration statuses).

EU nationals with pre-settled status under the EU settlement scheme and 3 years ordinary residency in the UK, EEA, Switzerland and the overseas territories prior to starting the course and studying a course in England could be eligible to receive the loan.

Previous Study and Age

You can only get a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan if you do not already have an equivalent Doctoral qualification such as a PhD. If you borrow a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan for a course but don't complete it, you won't be able to get a second Postgraduate Doctoral Loan. However, if you have to withdraw from your course for compelling personal reasons, such as illness, you may still be able to apply for another Postgraduate Doctoral Loan.

Students must also be under the age of 60 on the first day of the first academic year of the course in order to be eligible to receive the loan.

How Much?

You could get a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan of up to £29,390 for a course starting in 2024/25 academic year. Your loan payments will be spread out across all the academic years of your course with the loan is paid in three instalments at the start of each term. Applications for postgraduate loans from Student Finance England generally open in the spring, prior to the start of your course.

For additional, impartial advice and guidance, please speak to course and faculty teams at your university or access additional advice from partner organisations including Prospects, FindAMaster.com, ThinkPostgrad.com or UCAS Postgraduate.

If you are ordinarily resident (or an EU national based) in any other part of the UK, you should speak to Student Finance Wales (SFW), Student Finance Northern Ireland (SFNI) or Students Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) for advice.

Postgraduate Loan Repayment

If you already have an undergraduate loan or masters loan you will be required to repay all loans concurrently. But there are some distinct differences between repaying the undergraduate and postgraduate loans.

Full time, postgraduate students will go into repayment the April after finishing or leaving the course. Postgraduate loans are repaid on Plan 3 basis – which is 6% of any income earned over £21,000 (£1750 per month or £403 per week). Plan 3 loans have a fixed rate of interest which is applied at RPI+3 %.

Any postgraduate loan remaining 30 years after entering the repayment date (the April following completion or withdrawal of the course) will be written off.

You can find information on repaying your postgraduate loan on gov.uk:
www.gov.uk/repaying-your-student-loan/what-you-pay

Additional Funding?

You won't be able to get a Postgraduate Doctoral Loan if you're getting any Research Council Funding or an Educational Psychology Bursary. Being eligible to apply for a healthcare bursary or in receipt of a social work bursary from the NHS, Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) or SAAS also means you aren't eligible for Postgraduate Doctoral Loan.

Postgraduate Disabled Students Allowance

Disabled Students Allowance is available for postgraduate study in the same way as it was available for undergraduate study. You may be entitled to receive an updated assessment of needs, and the maximum support available is £26,948 per year of your course. Please speak to your university Disability Services for additional information and application advice.

What If My Circumstances Change?

A change in your circumstances may affect your eligibility to the Postgraduate Doctoral Loan. You should speak to your university tutor or student support team if you need to repeat, suspend or withdraw from your studies.

Suspension of Study

If you suspend your study with the agreement of your Provider, the default position is that no funding will be released until you resume your study. Once resumed, loan payments will resume with any instalments due up to the point of resumption being paid to you once you have restarted.

Repeat Study

No payments will be made during repeat periods of study. The Postgraduate Doctoral Loan is a one-time only loan, so it is not usually possible to access a second loan if you are required to repeat the entire course. The exception to this rule is if the full course repeat is due to reasons or circumstances outside of your control (known as compelling personal reasons). Commonly, this is related (but not limited to) personal or family health and illness reasons. You are advised to speak to your faculty and course leaders about any changes to your circumstances.

Withdrawing from Study

If you withdraw from your course, all future payments of doctoral support will be cancelled. The loan payment made during the period in which you were on course will be left in place and so there will be no loan overpayment immediately due from you. Any payments made to you will become repayable when the loan enters repayment status.

If you received any Postgraduate Doctoral Loan after you have left your course, this money will be classed as an overpayment which will need to be repaid immediately (and not through the standard income repayment method). You are advised to speak to your faculty and course leaders about any changes to your circumstances.

Further information:

You can contact postgraduate queries by telephone: 0300 100 0031. Lines are open Monday to Friday: 8am to 8pm and Saturday: 9am to 4pm

You can also access more information via the student room website and gov.uk:

www.thestudentroom.co.uk/student-finance/postgraduate/

www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study