

POSTGRADUATE LOAN (PGL) for MASTER'S STUDY

Summary AY2017/18 (Wales) – Edition 1

From AY2017/18, a loan of up to £10,280 per student for postgraduate Master's study will be available for Welsh domiciled students.

Postgraduate Loan (PGL) for Master's study will be: a contribution towards the costs of study, i.e. it will be at the student's discretion to use the loan towards fees, maintenance costs or other costs; non-means tested; paid directly to the student into their UK bank account.

Cohorts: Students starting a master's course in AY2017/18 or later (i.e. on or after 1st August 2017)

Domiciles: Wales/EU

Destinations: UK ('Welsh domiciled' students) Wales ('EU domiciled' students)

Personal Eligibility

Residency: PGL will be available to persons settled in the UK; who are ordinarily resident in Wales and who have been ordinarily resident in the UK and Islands for three years on the first day of the first academic year of their course. A person is considered to be ordinarily resident in the place from which the person has moved for the purpose of undertaking a designated course. Temporary absences from the home address, such as for travelling, will not prevent an applicant being eligible for PGL. Individuals may be eligible if they are an EU national or refugee; have leave to enter or remain; are an EEA or Swiss migrant worker; are a family member of any of the previous categories, or a child of a Swiss national or child of a Turkish worker.

Age Criteria: Applicants must be aged under 60 on the first day of the first academic year of the course. The 'academic year' is the period of twelve months starting on 1st September, 1st January, 1st April or 1st July.

Applicants: Students will submit **one** loan application for the length of the course. The application and any changes to the loan request amount must be submitted within 9 months of the start date of the final academic year of the course.

Applicants will not be eligible for PGL if they have outstanding student loan arrears or are 'unfit' for student support (e.g. because of attempted fraud).

Students who already hold a Master's qualification (or an equivalent or higher level qualification) will not be eligible for PGL. This applies even if the previous qualification was entirely self-funded and/or achieved outside Wales or the UK. Lower level qualifications or Postgraduate Certificates of Education will not affect eligibility for PGL.

Personal Eligibility

Students who have already received PGL funding for a Master's course will not be eligible for repeat funding where they did not complete the course, unless they have a compelling personal reason for receiving repeat funding.

Topping Up: PGL will only be available where the student is undertaking a full stand alone Master's course, not a partial Master's course requiring a lesser number of credits, either as a result of the student's previous study or experience.

Course Eligibility

The student must start the course in AY2017/18 or later (i.e. on or after 1st August 2017). The course may be provided by:

- a publically funded HE Provider in the UK
- an alternative provider with specific designation

Note: Designation arrangements for Alternative Providers are still to be confirmed.

Course Structure: Course may have an overseas element but this cannot exceed 50% of the total course. One and two year full-time courses are eligible for support. Part-time courses studied over two to four years are eligible, and are subject to a minimum average 50% intensity requirement where there is an equivalent full-time course.

Part-time courses that are up to 3 years in length and have no full-time equivalent course are eligible for support.

Eligible courses may be taught or research based, and include professional Master's courses such as MBAs. There are no subject restrictions. The student can attend an eligible course anywhere in the UK or study an eligible course by undertaking distance learning in Wales (subject to restrictions on personal eligibility).

Armed Forces: Support will be available for serving members of the armed forces or their family member who are undertaking a distance learning course outside the UK.

Master's courses that are currently funded by the undergraduate support system, such as integrated Master's, will not be eligible for PGL. Neither will other postgraduate qualifications that do not result in a Master's qualification, such as a Postgraduate Diploma.

Students may not be eligible for PGL where they are eligible to apply for a healthcare bursary or are in receipt of a social work bursary. Policy is being finalised in this area and the intention is to avoid double funding.

Payment

No payments will be released until the applicant has supplied their valid National Insurance Number (NINO) where they have one. The minimum loan request amount is £1. Students can amend the amount of loan requested up to nine months after the start of the academic year, but cannot request less than has been paid.

Payments will be released following receipt of confirmation from the HE Provider that the student is in study. This must be confirmed at the start of each academic year of the course.

Payments of PGL will be made in three instalments per academic year, scheduled as follows:

- Payment 1: Course start date as advised by the HE Provider*
- Payment 2: 4 months after the course start month (last Wed of month)
- Payment 3: 7 months after the course start month (last Wed of month)

*Payment on this date depends on the HE Provider confirming the student is in study.

Maximum loan per academic year: Payments will be capped as follows in each AY:

Course Length	Maximum Loan per AY
2 AYs	Year 1 - £5,140 Year 2 - £5,140
3 AYs	Year 1 - £3,426 Year 2 - £3,426 Year 3 - £3,428
4 AYs	Year 1 - £2,570 Year 2 - £2,570 Year 3 - £2,570 Year 4 - £2,570

Change of Circumstances

Transfers: Transferring between designated postgraduate Master's courses is permitted. Where the new course is at a different HE Provider, the student must notify SLC of the transfer before any future payments will be made to the student. This ensures that students are registered at the correct HE Provider before future instalments are released.

Repeat Study: Will generally not be funded (even where the student did not complete a previous postgraduate course, or requested less than the maximum loan amount). Repeat funding will only be awarded where the student can prove compelling personal reasons.

Further funding is not usually available where the student does not complete the course. However students can suspend and resume their course (no payments are usually made during periods of absence). Withdrawals should be notified to SLC immediately so that payments are not made when the student is no longer in study. This will be closely monitored by SLC to ensure compliance to the current policy. Any payment made after the student leaves study will be treated as a loan overpayment.

Repayment

The student must repay their Postgraduate Loan in line with the regulations at the time they enter repayment.

When they take out their Postgraduate Loan the repayment terms will be based on current regulations. This is expected to change when new legislation is passed by the UK Parliament. This means when the student enters repayment the terms might be different. It's the student's responsibility to check back and make sure they have the most up-to-date information.

The following repayment information covers both the current repayment terms and the expected repayment regulations.

The student can find full details of the current regulations at the Education (Student Loans) (Repayment) Regulations 2009, as amended.

When will repayments start

Students have to repay any Postgraduate Loan they borrow, including the interest charged but not until they've finished or left their course and their income is over the repayment threshold which is currently £21,000 per year, £1,750 a month, or £404 a week, before tax and National Insurance.

They'll be due to start making repayments the April after they finish or leave their course.

If they leave their course early they may need to repay any overpaid amount. The amount of loan which is overpaid will be exempt from the earning threshold and will be due as soon as possible.

Once their income is over the repayment threshold, they'll repay 9% of their income above this.

Interest

Interest will be applied to the Postgraduate Loan balance from the day we make the first payment to the student until the loan is repaid in full or cancelled. The interest rate is based on the UK Retail Price Index (RPI) and will vary depending on the students circumstances. The interest rate is updated once a year in September, using the RPI from March of that year.

If the student already has student loans

If the student already has a student loan, how much they repay will depend on when they started their undergraduate course.

If the student started their undergraduate course on or after 1 September 2012 (Plan 2)

Students will repay 9% of their income over £21,000 towards the student loans they borrowed for their undergraduate course, and their Postgraduate Loan. This means they'll repay 9% of their income over £21,000 in total.

If they started their undergraduate course between 1 September 1998 and 1 September 2012 (Plan 1)

If the students income is between £17,775 and £21,000 a year they will repay 9% of their income towards the loans they borrowed for their undergraduate course.

If their income is more than £21,000 a year they will repay 9% of their income, and it will be spread across the loans they borrowed for their undergraduate course and Postgraduate Loan.

If they started their course before 1 September 1998

Students will continue to repay or defer the loans they borrowed for their undergraduate course and they'll repay 9% of their income over £21,000 towards their Postgraduate Loan.

They can't defer their Postgraduate Loan - repayments will stop automatically when their income is below the repayment threshold.

What will students repay once the new legislation has been passed?

Students will repay 6%, instead of 9%, of their income over the repayment threshold towards their Postgraduate Loan. But they won't have to make any repayments before April 2019.

If their income is below the repayment threshold, they won't have to make any repayments.

They're charged interest from the day the first payment is made to them until their loan is repaid in full or cancelled. The interest rate is based on the UK Retail Price Index (RPI) plus three percent.

If they've had any other student loans, they'll repay these at the same time. How much they repay will depend on when they started their undergraduate course.

If the student started their undergraduate course on or after 1 September 2012 (Plan 2)

Students will repay 9% of their income over £21,000 towards the student loans they borrowed for their undergraduate course and 6% of their income over £21,000 towards their Postgraduate Loan. This means they'll repay 15% of their income over £21,000 in total.

If the student started their undergraduate course between 1 September 1998 and 1 September 2012 (Plan 1)

Students will repay 9% of their income over the repayment threshold, which is currently £17,775, towards the student loan they borrowed for their undergraduate course and 6% of their income over £21,000 towards their Postgraduate Loan.

If the student started their course before 1 September 1998

Students will continue to repay or defer the loans they borrowed for their undergraduate course and they'll repay 6% of their income over £21,000 towards their Postgraduate Loan.

They can't defer their Postgraduate Loan - repayments will stop automatically when their income is below the repayment threshold.