

## **Funding Information: Professional and Career Development Loans**

### **What is a Professional and Career Development Loan?**

A Professional and Career Development Loan is a bank loan to help you pay for work-related learning. The Learning and Skills Council (LSC) pays the interest on the loan while you're studying – and for one month afterwards. Then once you've stopped studying, you pay it back in the normal way. Interest rates on the loans are set so they're competitive with other 'unsecured' personal loans that are commercially available.

### **Do you qualify?**

To be eligible, you'll need to be:

- 18 or over
- 'settled' in the UK, and have been ordinarily resident in the UK for at least the three years prior to the start of your learning programme
- intending to work in the UK, the EU or the EEA when the course finishes.

'Settled' means having either indefinite leave to enter or remain or having the right of abode in the UK.

### **How can a Professional and Career Development Loan help you?**

A Professional and Career Development Loan can help to fund a wide range of courses lasting up to two years (or three years, if the course includes a year of work experience). The course doesn't necessarily have to lead to a qualification, but it must be one that will help with your career. You'll find detailed information in the application pack, but in general a Professional and Career Development Loan could be an option for:

- a postgraduate course, like a masters
- technical or management training
- a professional qualification
- a course at your local college or learning provider
- an additional bachelors degree (if you're already a graduate)

Professional and Career Development Loans are available through an arrangement between the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) and participating high street banks.

You can borrow anything between £300 and £10,000. Remember, a Professional and Career Development Loan is a personal loan between you and the bank, and you are responsible for repaying it to the bank. Before taking out a loan, check how much your monthly repayments will be, and make sure you will be able to pay them.

## **What do Professional and Career Development Loans cover?**

Your Professional and Career Development Loan can be used to pay for more than just course fees. Before you apply, think carefully about what you need your loan to cover. This will help you to decide how much you need to borrow.

There are three areas that your Career Development Loan can cover:

- course fees - 80 per cent of your course fees, or 100 per cent if you have been out of work for three months or more at the time of application
- other course costs - including, books, equipment, tools, childcare, travel expenses and any costs associated with disability
- living expenses - for food, ordinary clothing or footwear, household fuel, rent, housing costs, council tax and water charges. These costs must not be covered by any other grant or state benefit and you must not undertake work involving more than 30 hours per week.

Your loan can cover one or more of the above, but cannot be more than £10,000 in total and Professional and Career Development Loans will only support the vocational or learning elements of a course.

## **Which courses can a Professional and Career Development Loan pay for?**

A Professional and Career Development Loan can help to pay for up to two years of vocational (work-related) learning or up to three years if the course includes one year's relevant practical work experience. If your course lasts longer than this, you may still be able to use a Professional and Career Development Loan to pay for part of it.

Your loan can be used to pay for all sorts of vocational learning, from management to technical training in almost every area of work and industry. You can take any full-time, part-time, or distance learning course.

You can achieve many different qualifications, from Scottish Vocational Qualifications (SVQs) to Open University and postgraduate qualifications. In some circumstances, your Professional and Career Development Loan can also help to pay for qualification assessments.

You can only use one Professional and Career Development Loan to pay for one course. However, if you borrow less than the maximum amount you may be able to increase your loan. Remember, you still have to repay your loan, even if you do not complete the course.

You'll need to think about what you want to achieve from your learning:

- what career do you want?
- what skills and experience will you need?
- what qualifications will you need?

A vocational course does not necessarily have to lead to a qualification to be funded by a Professional and Career Development Loan

### **Which courses are not eligible?**

Some courses are not eligible for a Professional and Career Development Loan, or have some restrictions.

- **Careers counseling courses**  
The loan cannot be used to fund any course that only provides careers information, advice and guidance. This includes careers counseling, careers progression, CV writing, etc. However, the loan can be used to fund a course leading to a professional qualification in career guidance.
- **Franchise courses**  
A Professional and Career Development Loan must only cover the initial learning costs, usually the induction training. It must not be used to pay for the franchise or to buy a license from the franchiser.
- **Foundation courses**  
A foundation or access course used as the first step towards a degree course is not eligible for a Professional and Career Development Loan. However, a stand-alone foundation course that leads to employment in its own right would be eligible.

### **Which learning provider is best for me?**

It's worth researching several learning providers before you make a choice. You need to:

- check that the learning provider is registered with the Learning Skills Council Professional and Career Development Loan programme – you won't be able to get a loan for a course with that provider until they do register
- speak to others who have taken the course
- check what qualifications you will get
- ask to see any public inspection reports on the provider
- check how the learning is provided, and if any extra costs are involved.

The Learning Skills Council and the banks do not monitor or approve learning providers and cannot accept any responsibility if your chosen learning provider stops trading or fails to offer you the learning you need to the standard you expect.

### **How do you apply?**

You can apply for an application pack by calling the Professional and Career Development Loan information line on 0800 585 505 between 8am and 10pm, seven days a week. For further information, visit the website at [www.direct.gov.uk/pcdl](http://www.direct.gov.uk/pcdl)