

Professional and Career Development Loans (PCDLs)

Professional and Career Development Loans are bank loans that can be used to help pay for work-related learning. If you are aged eighteen or over you can borrow between £300 and £10,000 to help support the cost of up to two years of learning (or three years if it includes one year's relevant unpaid practical work).

The Learning and Skills Council will pay the interest on the loan while you are learning and for one month afterwards. The loan can be used to pay up to 80% of course fees (100% if you've been unemployed for more than 3 months) or other costs such as books, childcare and travel, and living expenses (like rent, food and clothing).

You can also use the loan to supplement other forms of support such as grants or bursaries.

Because the Professional and Career Development Loan (PCDL) is a commercial loan only consider it as an option once you have looked into all other student funding options.

In Scotland about 1,200 people a year have PCDLs; the Scottish Government hopes to increase this to 3,600 by 2010 - 2011.

You can use the a PCDL for many full-time, part-time or distance learning courses at all sorts of levels, including Open University and postgraduate courses.

You can't use a PCDL to completely fund a full time first degree, but you can apply for a loan to help with your living costs if these are only partly covered by any other funding you get.

The average PCDL loan for Scottish learners is around £5,500, most loans are used to support taught postgraduate courses, such as Masters degrees.

Contact the Professional and Career Development Loans helpline for more information at **0800 585 505** (open 8am-10pm, seven days) or visit their website at www.direct.gov.uk/pcdl