

Quick guide

Postgraduate master's courses

Overview

In academic year 2016/17 only English-domiciled and EU students were eligible to apply for Postgraduate Master's Loans.

Since academic year 2017/18 English, Welsh and EU students are eligible to apply for Postgraduate Master's Loans. Additionally, NI-domiciled students are eligible to apply for the Northern Ireland Postgraduate Tuition Fee Loan. These postgraduate courses can be set up in CMS specifically for NI students.

Scottish students are also eligible to apply for postgraduate funding and these courses can be set up in CMS specifically for Scottish-domiciled students. Previously, they were set up within our undergraduate section of CMS. However, from academic year 2020/21 you can create these courses within the postgraduate section of CMS. This allows you to submit more accurate course details.

Postgraduate qualification

Postgraduate loans will only be available for postgraduate master's courses, either taught or research-based, in any subject area. The course will lead to a master's qualification, the most common are listed below:

- MSc (Master of Science)
- MA (Master of Arts)
- MPhil (Master of Philosophy)
- MRes (Master of Research)
- LLM (Master of Law)
- MLitt (Master of Letters)
- MFA (Master of Fine Arts)
- MEd (Master of Education)
- MBA (Master of Business Administration)

There are many different types of master's degree, but all such degrees are expected to meet the outcomes identified in the qualification descriptors required by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). These are set out in, 'The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), 2018' or 'The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland 2001'.

When a course is set up with a funding level of postgraduate master's the following qualifications will be shown in the qualifications drop-down:

- Taught Master's
- Research Master's
- Master of Architecture (PG SFE and SFW courses)
- Postgraduate Certificate (PG NI courses only)
- Postgraduate Diploma (PG Scottish and NI courses)

The following course types will be ineligible for a Postgraduate Master's Loan:

- Undergraduate-funded courses
- Postgraduate ITT courses
- Scottish Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Architecture (where the Parts 1 and 2 are completed as a single course)
- English postgraduate healthcare courses
- Integrated master's courses which will continue to receive undergraduate funding
- Doctoral courses (PhDs)
- Other postgraduate-level courses (PGCert, PGDip etc.)
- Postgraduate courses at ROI providers*

* ROI providers should not add any postgraduate courses for NI students.

Intercalated courses

If an undergraduate course has an intercalating year where the student undertakes a master's degree, the student will be eligible for a postgraduate loan in the intercalating year. However, this will make the student ineligible for any further undergraduate funding.

For more information on intercalated courses please see our Attributes Guidance on the [HEP Services website](#).

Academic years

The academic year is defined in the regulations as a 12-month period beginning on either 1 September, 1 January, 1 April or 1 July, depending on when the course started.

The table below shows the academic years depending on the course start dates.

Date course started	Academic year
Between 1 August and 31 December	1 September - 31 August
Between 1 January and 31 March	1 January - 31 December
Between 1 April and 30 June	1 April - 31 March
Between 1 July and 31 July	1 July - 30 June

Course duration

Full-time courses

Full-time postgraduate courses for England and Wales can be a total duration of 1 or 2 years. For NI domiciled students, this can be a duration between 1 and 3 years and is also the duration that can be applied for part-time postgraduate courses.

For information on postgraduate courses for Scottish students, please see the [Quick Guide for Scottish Postgraduate](#) courses.

Part-time English courses

Part-time course durations for English-domiciled students remains as it was for academic year 2017/18. A part-time postgraduate master's course for SFE-domiciled students can be set up with duration of one or two years 'full time equivalent' or two or three years 'fixed duration' – if there is no full-time equivalent course:

- SFE part-time courses with a duration of 1 year 'full time equivalent' – will be studied over 2 years
- SFE part-time courses with a duration of 2 years 'full time equivalent' – will be studied over 3 or 4 years
- SFE part-time courses with a duration of 2 years 'no full time equivalent' – will be studied over 2 years
- SFE part-time courses with a duration of 3 years 'no full time equivalent' – will be studied over 3 years

Part-time Welsh courses

As of academic year 2018/19, part-time postgraduate master's courses for SFW domiciled students can be set up with a duration of either 2, 3 or 4 years. Where a course has a full-

time equivalent, the course duration should be entered as the duration of study in academic years, and not the full-time equivalent duration.

Therefore current master's courses should be split out for each domicile (England, Wales, NI, and Scotland). For example, where a one-year full-time equivalent course is studied over 2 years, the course should be entered with a duration of 2 years:

- SFW part-time courses studied over 2 years should be entered as 2 years 'no full time equivalent'
- SFW part-time courses studied over 3 years should be entered as 3 years 'No full time equivalent'
- SFW part-time courses studied over 4 years should be entered as 4 years 'No full time equivalent'

Providers setting up new courses from academic year 2018/19 to be designated for Wales have the option to select a 4-year duration.

Validation

All duration options will be displayed on CMS, however, you will be unable to save a course with a 1 or 2 year full-time equivalent duration designated for Wales. You will receive an error message that you cannot save a course with this duration and Welsh designation. Likewise, you will be unable to save a course with 4 years no full-time equivalent duration designated for England. You will receive an error message that you cannot save a course with this duration and English designation.

Term dates

If you offer postgraduate master's courses you need to enter 3 sets of term dates for all years of study. This is to ensure that students accurately receive their funding payments throughout the period of their study.

The terms dates entered will determine the student's payment dates. If you do not have terms, we still need 3 terms in our systems as we pay your students at 3 points throughout the academic year. You should create term dates that reflect the study pattern of your students as closely as possible. For example, you could use any holiday periods as a natural term break.

Where the final course year is shorter than the rest of the course years, this should be reflected in the term dates. For example, if the course has a duration of 15 months, the second year would be 3 months long. The last year of study still requires three terms regardless of the length, so in this example the three term dates for year 2 could be each of the three remaining months. You can find further examples in the scenario section below.

Scenario 1

3-year part-time course, term dates may look like:

Year 1 –

Term 1 27 Aug – 21 Dec

Term 2 14 Jan – 19 Apr

Term 3 7 May – 20 Jul

Year 2 –

Term 1 27 Aug – 21 Dec

Term 2 14 Jan – 19 Apr

Term 3 7 May – 20 Jul

Year 3 –

Term 1 27 Aug – 21 Dec

Term 2 14 Jan – 19 Apr

Term 3 7 May – 20 Jul

Scenario 2

18-month full-time course, term dates may look like:

Year 1 –

Term 1 27 Aug – 21 Dec

Term 2 14 Jan – 19 Apr

Term 3 7 May – 20 Jul

Year 2 –

Term 1 27 Aug – 25 Oct

Term 2 28 Oct – 21 Dec

Term 3 13 Jan – 21 Feb

Adding intakes

When creating a new course, once you have entered term dates for all years of the course, there is an option to add another intake. This would mean that if the course you are creating has a September start, you can also enter a separate intake for the same course which starts at a later date in the academic year (for instance in January). You cannot add an intake once you have saved a course, so you should add all intakes before saving. You can create up to 12 intakes under a postgraduate master's course – only one per month. If you need to, you can amend the first intake month when you save the course in the new academic year. For example, if your course had a September intake in the previous academic year, you can change this to October in the new academic year.

Available course years

The Available Course Years functionality can be applied to all full-time and part-time postgraduate courses. The two settings are as follows:

- All Students
- No Students

Due to the apply once nature of postgraduate applications, you should set your courses to No Students rather than closing courses to ensure continuing students still receive their funding. This also allows students to be transferred on or off the courses if needed. When a course is closed continuing students will not receive their funding in the following years of their course.

English postgraduate master's healthcare courses

From academic year 2018/19 the Department of Health does not fund tuition fees through Health Education England or bursaries through NHS BSA to new students studying postgraduate healthcare courses in England.

Instead, English-domiciled students new to a postgraduate healthcare course in academic year 2018/19 will be eligible for the standard undergraduate package of support.

To be eligible for this package of support, postgraduate healthcare courses must meet the following criteria:

- a designated pre-registration course in allied health profession subjects, nursing or midwifery (see list of courses below)
- a level 7 postgraduate master's or postgraduate diploma
- full-time
- not distance learning
- must be a minimum of 2 academic years

Eligible courses are those leading to professional registration in:

- Chiropody
- Dental hygiene
- Dental therapy
- Dietetics and nutrition
- Nursing – diplomas and degrees (including courses to convert from second to first level registration)
- Midwifery – diplomas and degrees
- Occupational therapy
- Operating department practice – diplomas and degrees
- Orthoptics
- Physiotherapy
- Podiatry
- Prosthetics and orthotics
- Radiography
- Radiotherapy
- Speech and language therapy

From academic year 2018/19 you should enter an undergraduate course for English-domiciled students, allowing them to access the undergraduate package. You should also enter a postgraduate course for Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish-domiciled students to allow them to access the appropriate postgraduate loan where applicable.

The qualification on the undergraduate courses should be set to Postgraduate Healthcare. Validation in CMS ensures that once you have selected this qualification, you can only check the English domicile in the Designation section. This ensures that only English-domiciled students can select these courses. They will not be available to Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish students.

You should fill all other fields as normal for these undergraduate courses.

For Scottish, Northern Irish and Welsh-domiciled students, you should add postgraduate healthcare courses as normal postgraduate courses with the relevant qualifications.

Architecture courses

SFE students

The two parts of an architecture course may be treated as a single course for student support purposes and receive the undergraduate level of funding. This is unaffected by a student undertaking a year's practical experience between the two parts. The two parts can still be treated as a single course even if a student takes a break of more than a year between them, provided it is clear that the student had not withdrawn from the overall course at the end of part 1.

For example, a student completes part 1 and a year of practical experience and then decides to take a year out before starting part 2. They can still be treated as attending the same single course provided the facts of their case do not show that they withdrew from the course at the end of part 1.

The regulations do not require a student to declare, before starting or completing part 1, their intention to attend both parts 1 and 2 for the two parts to be treated as a single course.

For the course to be treated as a single course the student must:

- not withdraw between part 1 and 2
- not change mode of study
- not have an excessive gap between completing the two parts

If a student applies for support for part 2 of the architecture course and it is not being undertaken in conjunction with a part 1 course, and therefore cannot be treated as part of a single course, the student will not qualify for undergraduate support. In these cases the

student may apply for postgraduate master's support if the course meets the designation criteria.

The single course provision only applies to full-time courses. Therefore, students who have switched mode of study, or who are undertaking both courses part-time, will not qualify for undergraduate support for part 2. They may be eligible for postgraduate master's support if the course meets the designation criteria.

SFW students

The same rules apply to Welsh students as English students with the following exceptions.

From academic year 2018/19 the Welsh Government amended the single course provision to include courses that are both full-time and part-time. Therefore, students who are undertaking both courses either full-time or part-time, can qualify for undergraduate support for part 2 of the course. In this scenario the student will need to be a 2018 cohort student for both the part 1 and part 2.

Undergraduate courses

There are 2 parts of an architecture course that are treated as one single course for student support purposes.

You should add these courses to CMS through the undergraduate route, for more information on adding undergraduate courses please see our [Undergraduate quick guide](#).

Postgraduate courses

If a student has a gap longer than 3 years between parts 1 and 2 of an architecture course, the student would apply for postgraduate master's support if the course meets the designation criteria.

You should add these courses to CMS through the postgraduate route, choosing the Master of Architecture qualification. We will assess the student's application and determine if this is the correct funding level for the student.

Part 2 – Not leading to a qualification as an architect

If the student studies a part 2 architecture course that doesn't lead to qualification as an architect, then this would not be considered for undergraduate support and would always attract postgraduate support (providing this meets the course designation criteria). You should add these courses to CMS as postgraduate courses.

Scottish postgraduate courses

From academic year 2020/21 you can add postgraduate courses for Scottish students as a postgraduate course rather than an undergraduate course.

The Courses Management Service (CMS) has been updated with a Scotland radio button to allow you to do this.

For information on how to add postgraduate courses for Scottish students, please refer to the [Quick Guide for Scottish Postgraduate](#) courses.