


DVD **60% off GREAT DVDs**  **amazon.co.uk** and you're done.<sup>™</sup> **BUY NOW**  
Black Hawk Down

[Read today's paper](#)

[Sign in](#) | [Register](#)

Go to:

**The Observer Cash**

<a href="#">Home</a>	<a href="#">UK news</a>	<a href="#">International</a>	<a href="#">Politics</a>	<a href="#">Business</a>	<a href="#">Comment</a>	<a href="#">Leaders</a>	<a href="#">Focus</a>
<a href="#">Sport</a>	<a href="#">Review</a>	<a href="#">Magazine</a>	<a href="#">Screen</a>	<a href="#">Travel</a>	<a href="#">Cash</a>	<a href="#">Letters</a>	<a href="#">Food</a>



# Master your finances, then sign up

Nick Kettles on how to manage the cost of postgraduate study

Sunday February 6, 2005

[The Observer](#)

**Tools**

- [Text-only version](#) ▶
- [Send it to a friend](#) ▶
- [Save story](#) ▶

**The Observer**

- [Front page](#) ▶
- [Story index](#) ▶

**Recent articles**

[The mother of all dilemmas](#)

[All the latest money news](#)

[Jill Insley: When water companies peddle snake oil](#)

[Money Coach: Big ideas for losing interest](#)

[Windfall or burden?](#)

[Diamonds: learn the rules of engagement](#)

[Heather Connon: Investing can be worth more in a hedge](#)

[Scientists want all homes protected from radon threat](#)

The number of postgraduate students has increased fourfold in the past decade, with some 30 per cent mid-career. So, if you want to join their swelling ranks in September 2005, the sooner you start forward planning to minimise the impact on your life and your wallet, the better.


[Prospects.ac.uk](#), the UK's official graduates career web site, is a one-stop-information-shop-cum-portal, and a great place to start. It efficiently allows you to pinpoint which course, subject and university; offers links to career advice services for those still unsure; lists independent sources of help in getting on the course (mastering applications and interviews); and helps you prepare for study once you are accepted (computer refresher courses, for example).

Alternatively, you can seek this information as an alumnus from the careers services of the university you graduated from.

A thorough cost analysis is of paramount importance. With fees ranging from £3,000 for a basic part-time masters, to £30,000 for an Ivy League full-time MBA, there are a number of ways to pay in addition to hard earned savings or a supportive spouse.

For a course that helps you progress with your existing job, your employer may be willing to help through a form of 'golden handcuffs'. You study, they help, you pay back in kind for perpetuity. However, if a part-time course requires time off work, possibly for travel, you may have to accept a pro-rata salary, and should assess whether this will continue to cover your outgoings.

[Prospects.ac.uk](#) also lists scholarships and bursaries currently available, which may prove a good guide for identifying the right course in the first place.

**Vote in the Guardian and Observer Travel Awards and win one of 34 fantastic holidays.**

**Guardian Unlimited**

[Dream Home: Brooke House, Helston, Cornwall](#)

[Shanghai morning, noon - and nights](#)

[Make me an offer](#)

[Fancy life as a property millionaire? That'll be £3,995, please](#)

[All the latest property news](#)

[Pricewatch London](#)

[Q & A](#)

**The Guardian**

[Front page](#)

[Story index](#)

But by far the most popular form of payment is a career development loan (CDL), a form of deferred repayment. You can apply for a loan of between £300 and £8,000 to cover up to 80 per cent of your course and other costs such as books (in theory you could calculate this to cover the remaining 20 per cent of your fees).

You make no repayments while you're studying, with interest payments courtesy of the Department for Education and Skills for up to one month after you've finished. CDLs are available through three major banks: - Barclays, Co-operative and Royal Bank of Scotland. You don't need a bank account with them and you should shop around as interest rates and terms vary.

You may also be able to negotiate flexible terms of study with your tutor, provided you complete assignments. This may prove invaluable as a way of structuring your time. Postgraduate study can be intellectually demanding, and so failure to do this is an inevitable cause of the high attrition rates on some courses.

Sabbaticals can prove useful if circumstances change mid-course. For me, a gap between years of studying for an MA has become the equivalent of a commercial break, while I restructure our finances. I regret not having projected our monthly household budget better, but the sabbatical has provided an opportunity to apply what I have learnt so far.

If all this already sounds exhausting, don't be downhearted. Planned well, postgraduate study can become a crossroads on a poorly constructed career path, and offers rich rewards over and beyond more financially fulfilling or satisfying employment.

[www.lifelonglearning.co.uk](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk)

[www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)

[www.dfes.gov.uk](http://www.dfes.gov.uk)

### **Career Development Loans:**

#### **Bank Rate Terms % APR**

**BARCLAYS** 7.6 typical Up to 5 years, repayment may be deferred for up to two months after completion of course.

**CO-OPERATIVE** 14 Up to 5 years, repayment may be deferred for up to a month.

**RBS** 10.6 Repayment may be deferred for up to a month.

**Source: MoneyFacts**





Guardian Unlimited © Guardian Newspapers Limited 2005