

Grants assistance towards PPC I & PPCII fees

The Professional Practice Course I (PPC I) is an approved course for grant purposes. Students wishing to attend the PPC I from September 2013 onwards should apply online to the Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). SUSI is the new single awarding authority for all new grant applications for the 2016/17 academic year. The online application facility is available through the [SUSI website](#).

You do not have to wait for confirmation of your place on the PPC I before applying for a grant. This is a new initiative on the part of the Department of Education and it will hopefully result in a greater number of grant applications being processed before the start of the PPC I. Potential candidates for the PPC I who wish to receive grant support are strongly advised to submit an application without delay. SUSI are currently accepting applications for 2016/2017 academic year. The closing date for the receipt of new applications is 8 July 2016

New PPC I applicants will not be entitled to any maintenance payment under the Student Grant Scheme 2016. However PPC I applicants who meet the qualifying conditions for the special rate of grant will be eligible to have their post-graduate tuition fees paid up to the maximum fee limit (€6,270).

A further limited number of students who would previously have qualified under the standard grant thresholds will qualify to have a €2,000 contribution made towards the costs of their fees. The new income threshold for this payment and further information about the new grant scheme is also available at the [SUSI website](#).

A student will be ineligible for funding for the Professional Practice Course if he or she already holds a Masters Degree at Level 9 unless that Masters Degree is in law. Please visit the [SUSI website](#) for further information on the requirements.

Grant Update

Introduction

Changes were made to the grant scheme in 2012 which affect the Professional Practice Course I and II. In an effort to help students understand the new system, we have produced this guide. This is only a general guide and reference should be made to the relevant regulations to assess eligibility.

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***For the purposes of this update we have reviewed the relevant legislation including
Student Support Act 2011 “the Act”
Student Support Regulations 2016
Student Grant Scheme 2016***

Grant awards

Am I eligible to receive a grant?

To receive a grant you have to be studying at an approved institution undertaking an approved course. The Law Society is an approved institution and the PPC I/II (which counts as one course for grant purposes) is an approved course. You must also satisfy the Nationality, Immigration and Residence conditions. For more information refer to the relevant regulations.

Finally there is the means test or income test. The income condition is obviously the biggest hurdle for most applicants. Under the new system, there is a higher and lower level of grant support. To be eligible for the higher grant award applicants have to be on a very low income and have been in receipt of one of the welfare benefits or special programmes listed in Schedule 2 of the SGS 2016. The means test is set out in the next section.

If I am eligible to receive a grant, how much will I get?

PPC I/II students will no longer receive a maintenance grant. Under the new grant scheme you may receive a contribution to your PPC I and II fees. There are two levels of grant assistance: a lower rate of €2000 and a higher rate of €6270. Whether you receive the higher or lower amount depends on income and whether or not you were receiving welfare assistance in 2015.

If you were living with your parents from 1 January in the year you first enter or re-enter an approved course, you are considered dependant on your parents and your income (if any) is assessed together with your parents' income. If you were not residing with your parents/guardians from the October prior to the year you first entered or re-entered an approved course, and can demonstrate that you have been living independently from that October, you are an Independent Student and will be assessed on your own income and that of your spouse/civil partner/cohabitant. Start gathering evidence of your income for 2015 now and apply to SUSI as soon as possible as applications can take several months to process. The table below shows the grant amounts that you may be entitled to depending on your circumstances.

Was your income (and that of your parents if you were living with them from Jan – Dec 2015) below €22,703?	
<p>If yes:</p> <p>You may be eligible for the special rate of grant for disadvantaged students of €6270. This is paid in two instalments of €4180 (PPC I) and €2090 (PPC II).</p> <p>To be eligible for this, you (or your parents if you were dependant on them on 1 January in the year you first enter or re-enter an approved course) must have been in receipt of a social welfare payment and/or participating in a designated programme on 31 December 2015. These payments and programmes are listed in Schedule 2 of SGS 2016.</p>	<p>If no:</p> <p>Was your income (and that of your parents if you were living with them at 1 October 2015) more than €22,703 but less than €31,500?</p> <p>This increases to a maximum of €37,580 based on number of dependents? Some welfare payments are excluded from 'reckonable income' and an allowance of up to €3,809 is made for your earnings outside of term-time.</p> <p>If so, then you are eligible to get the flat rate Fee Contribution of €2000. This is paid in instalments of €1333.33 (PPC I) and €666.66 PPC II).</p>

How is the grant money paid and /who is it paid to? If my firm paid my fees, will they get the grant monies?

If you are awarded the lower amount of €2000, you will receive €1333.33 for the PPC I and the balance during the PPC II. If you are awarded the higher amount, you will receive €4180 for the PPC I and the balance of €2090 during the PPC II. At some point between the two courses, you will be asked by SUSI to renew your grant. This needs to be done to ensure payment is received for the PPCII

The PPC I application fee of €840 is payable before the closing date for applications, which is 17 June 2016. The PPC I Course fees are payable by 11 August 2016.

SUSI pay your grant monies directly to the Law Society. The money is paid into the Law Society's Bank Account. Before SUSI pay the Law Society, they first ask us to invoice them on your behalf and at the same time confirm your attendance on the course.

Once the money has been received into the Law Society's Bank Account, we process that monies and organise for the refund to be sent to you or whoever paid the fees. The refund monies will go directly to whoever paid the fees, which may be your firm. The refund is given by way of a cheque. It ordinarily takes two weeks to refund you once the money has been lodged into the Law Society's account. Sometimes it can take a little bit longer than this, and sometimes it will take less time. The reason for this delay is that the Law Society has strict procedures in place to avoid fraud and the misappropriation of funds. Checks are made before money can be paid out. However, refunds are given top priority because we appreciate the difficult financial situation that students can experience during the training period.

As soon as the refund cheque is ready, we will organise for it to reach you in the quickest way possible. If the refund cheque is made payable to you and ready during the PPC I/II, we will email you to your Law Society email account and the cheque will be left at the Law School Reception for you to collect. In some cases, the grant monies are received after the PPC I/II is over. If that is the case we will post it to your home address. Alternatively, we will lodge the grant money directly into the account of the person who paid the PPC fees.

Please remember to keep us informed of any change in your contact details. Also keep your Law Society email account clear.

Applying for a grant

What is the earliest and latest date to apply for a grant?

You can apply immediately for a grant. It is highly recommended that you apply as soon as possible. You do not have to have applied to the Law School first. You can apply for a grant now and apply to the Law School later.

The closing date is the 8 July 2016. If you miss this deadline, still apply as they may allow your application.

Who do I apply to?

You apply to Student Universal Support Ireland (SUSI). The web address is www.susi.ie

How do I apply?

All grant applications are made online at the [SUSI website](http://www.susi.ie). You will need your PPS Number, an email address, and a valid phone number to apply online.

For further information please visit the [SUSI website](http://www.susi.ie).

If I received a PPC I grant do I need to apply again for the PPC II?

If you received a student grant from SUSI in 2015/16 and are continuing your studies on the same course in 2016/17 you will be contacted by SUSI regarding the renewal of your grant.

I was refused a grant for the PPC I – can I still apply for the PPC II?

Yes you can. Please see [information about changes in circumstances on the SUSI website](http://www.susi.ie). If you or your family have had a permanent reduction in your household income in 2015, and that reduction that is likely to last for the duration of your course, your application may be assessed or re-assessed on your 2015 income to reflect this.

Appeals

If I wish to appeal a decision in relation to my grant award, how do I do this?

If you think that you have been unjustly refused a grant, you may appeal by writing to the Student Grant Appeals Board. An application is available to download at www.susi.ie. You have 30 days to appeal. If you wish to appeal but have missed the 30-day limit, you can ask for an extension of time and this will be given to you if the appeals officer is satisfied that the person has given reasonable cause to so extend.

How long do appeals take to process?

SUSI aim to process appeals within 30 of receiving the appeal. The appeal process can take much longer.

Are many appeals successful?

Appeals grounded on incorrect application of the statutory provisions are usually successful.

FAQS

I read that the grant also pays for the PPC I Application Fee? Is that correct?

The maximum contribution you can receive is €6270 or €2000 depending on what level of grant support you were awarded. This money is to cover all your course costs, both the fees and the registration payment. Your PPC I application fee has to be paid before the course starts. Your grant will only be paid to you after. Therefore, the grant monies are put against the course fees

The application form asks me to state what level my course is with reference to the Framework of Qualifications. What is the level of the PPC I/II?

The PPC I/II is not part of the Framework of Qualifications. When you are asked this question in the form simply write in "Professional Practice Course I/II".

I have a Masters Degree (Level 9 Qualification see SGS 2016 Section 19), not in law. Am I still eligible for a grant for the PPC I/II?

No, you will not get a grant. However if you have any of the following qualifications you are still eligible for a grant.

- Level 8 Post Graduate Qualification (and no higher)
- Level 9 Post Graduate diploma (and no higher qualification)
- Level 9 Masters Degree in law

Is Tax relief available and, if so, how does it work?

Tax relief is available on postgraduate tuition fees. The relief is capped at fees of €7,000. Of this, the first €2,250 of a claim for full-time fees is disregarded, leaving a balance of €4,750. Relief is at the lower rate of 20%, so there is a possible tax refund of €950 for PPC fees. Of course, a person will have to have been paying tax to get a refund of tax. People who are not being paid at all, and those on minimum wage, may not have paid tax at all, so there will be no tax refund available. If you are in any doubt, you can check your payslip to see what tax you have paid (if any) this year.

People whose fees have been paid by their firm cannot claim a refund.

The fastest way to claim a tax refund is through the PAYE online facility on the revenue website. The refund (as with other reliefs such as health expenses) is then paid directly into the bank account nominated on the person's PAYE.