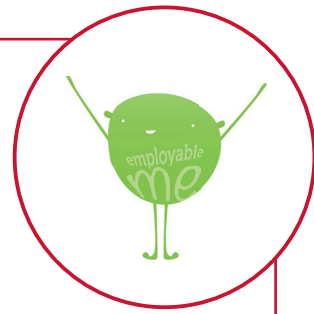
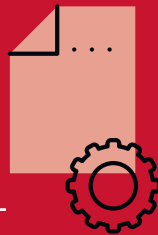
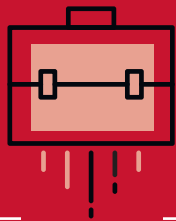




Which potential postgraduate are you?

I know what I would like to do and a postgraduate qualification is necessary for my career.

Great! Postgraduate qualifications are necessary for lots of careers such as teaching, law, careers advice and many more. Make sure that you research potential courses thoroughly before you apply, ensuring that the course is properly accredited (if necessary) and has a good history of supporting graduates into the area of work you want to go into. Just as with undergraduate degrees, many postgraduate courses have the same name but very different content so you want to be sure you pick one that suits you.



I want to pursue an academic or research intensive career.

If you are early on in your undergraduate degree then you can use your time now to build up extra research experience to increase your chances for success. Speak to your tutor about opportunities in your department, upcoming conferences and the best ways to get your work published. When selecting a postgraduate course, a smart thing to do is to consider if there are particular academics or universities specialising in your area of research. You may have come across this information in your reading. If so, you can apply to those universities, or the universities in which these academics work, to get the most out of your study. It is also worth considering showing mobility in your educational history, this means changing universities (and perhaps even countries) between undergraduate, Master's and PhD level study if possible. This is so that in the future when you apply for roles universities can see that you have been able to adapt to new environments and have had the opportunity to learn from a wide variety of people.

If you are studying a STEM subject, you may be able to jump from your undergraduate degree to a PhD without having to complete a Master's course.

Once you get onto your postgraduate path you still need to remember that you are in a competitive field. It is crucial that you build a strong network inside and outside of your department, which you can do by attending and contributing to conferences amongst other things. Aim to get published, teach and see if there are any competitions you can enter to bulk up your CV. All of this will contribute to greater chances of success after study.

I love my current subject and want to continue studying it.

It's fantastic that you have enjoyed your first degree so much and want to continue your learning. It is important at this point to weigh up the potential financial costs of a further course and make sure that you feel confident that the experience will be worth what you are paying for it. We often get feedback from Master's students that a yearlong course flies by, so it is very important that you start thinking about what you will do after the course as soon as possible.

My first degree doesn't lead to a job so I want to do something more professionally focussed.

Sometimes, a postgraduate qualification can be useful when looking for a professional role, especially if you want to work in a competitive field and you have limited or no work experience in the area that you're interested in. However, before you spend a year of your life and potentially quite a lot of money on study, double check that you can't land the same kind of job that you are aiming for through a graduate scheme. Many employers take on graduates from any degree discipline as long as you have some experience (such as placements, volunteering, part time work or self-employment). You can then train whilst you work and earn money too. You can find out more by speaking

with us or by browsing targetjobs.co.uk or prospect.ac.uk for information on graduate schemes and career sectors.

If you do decide that a postgraduate course is right for you, research your options carefully. Try to find one that has good links to employers and will allow you to gain work experience as you study, either as part of the course or in balance with your contact hours.

I don't think I'm ready to leave university and start work yet.

Lots of people feel like this in their final year. However, as continuing study is often expensive and only delays the transition into the workplace rather than stopping it altogether it is worth considering alternatives. Often, gaining more work experience during your undergraduate degree can make you feel more confident about entering the professional world once you have finished it. We can help with this and you can also have an appointment with us to discuss what kind of career might suit you. This could be beneficial as rushing into further study now could decrease your opportunities in the future. This is because you could become ineligible for funding for other courses later in your career once you have a postgraduate qualification. And remember, there are other things you can do! Lots of people choose to travel or volunteer before starting their graduate careers after university and these can be fun and rewarding ways to build confidence and prepare for the workplace.



The Application Process

Step 1. Research the courses

You can research what courses are available online through prospect.ac.uk as well as individual university websites. You can also learn more about student experiences of the courses and the application process on thestudentroom.co.uk.

Universities often offer postgraduate open days where you can learn more about what is on offer, however you don't always need to wait for these. If you have questions, most course pages have contact details available so you can speak to the admissions officer or course leader over the phone or through email. If you are applying for a Master's by research or a PhD it is smart to speak to the course leader before applying to discuss the project or your ideas.

Step 2. Decide what to apply for

There are lots of things to consider but you will likely need to weigh up:

- Taught or Research. A taught course will be similar to an undergraduate degree but at a more advanced level whereas a research course will be far more independent work and will allow you greater autonomy.
- Full time or part time
- Job prospects
- Course content and placement opportunities
- The university and department
- Location, this does not have to be in the UK. Many European countries offer degrees in English and costs can be cheaper elsewhere. You can find out more in the advice section of TargetPostgrad.com
- Costs. Not all courses cost the same amount of money.

Step 3. Apply

Unless you are applying to train to be a teacher you will need to apply for each course you are interested in independently through the university's own website rather than through UCAS. You can apply to as many courses as you like, but it can be time consuming so select as many as you think you have the time for.

You will likely need to write a **personal statement** outlining:

- a) Why you are interested in the course
- b) Why you are well suited to the course and related career (if applicable) by outlining your previous academic, work and extra-curricular experiences
- c) What you are planning to do after the course is complete.

Each university will provide its own instructions on how to write the statement and what to include. If it is not stated otherwise, a statement is normally around two A4 pages long.

You will also likely need references, you can ask staff here at the university as well as managers from work, placements or volunteering.

Step 4. Interviews

Some universities will decide whether or not to offer you a place based on your application alone, however, some others will require an interview. You can use our online resources as well as speaking to us to prepare for your interview. We can even offer you a mock interview where you practice answering questions and gain feedback beforehand if you would like.

Step 5. Accept or Decline

This is very straightforward. You can accept more than one place at different universities if you are not quite sure which course you want to do, however, it is best to decline any that you are no longer interested in as soon as possible so that the university can give your place to other candidates and prepare for the year ahead.

When should I do this?

A question without a simple answer. Some of the most popular courses can be full by the end of autumn term whereas for other courses, universities will accept applications even in the summer before a September start. It is always wise to plan ahead as early as possible and to check the timescales stated on a course page. It is typically a good idea to apply in autumn term, as often deadlines to apply for research council funding and scholarships can be around Easter or even earlier. You normally need to have been accepted onto a course before you can apply for funding.

Funding

Funding for postgraduate study can seem complicated, and that's because it is a bit! Some PhDs are advertised as funded, especially in STEM subjects, which can make things more straightforward, however, if your course is not advertised as funded, here is how things work:

There are **student loans offered by the government** but they differ from undergraduate loans. For Master's courses the maximum amount offered is just over £10,000 (this figure changes slightly each year with inflation) and for a PhD the total sum offered over three years is £25,000. You can learn about these loans in more depth using the links overleaf, however, at a glance it is worth knowing that they are for UK citizens planning to study on a full or part time taught or research course. The loan is paid to you rather than direct to your university and you pay it back once you are earning over £21,000 per year. Learn more about how and when to apply in the resources section overleaf.

You can typically find some **bursaries and scholarships** when looking at either Master's or PhD level study. These are often linked to and are unique to a particular university so you normally find information on them on the websites of the universities you are thinking of applying to. Many charities also offer small grants to postgraduate students and there is a link to a great article about this in the resources section at the end of this leaflet.

Research Councils are a major source of **postgraduate grants** for PhDs and they also offer some Master's funding. Funding can be for course fees alone or also include some money for living costs. To find out if you and your course are eligible for this funding you will need to look at the information provided by the university you wish to study at and potentially speak to the admission department for advice.

International Student? Some of these sources of funding may not be open to you, however there are loan and scholarship options available. See more information using the resources overleaf.

Resources

For information on funding through loans, research councils, charities, scholarships and bursaries and to search for postgraduate courses: prospects.ac.uk

To find available PhD opportunities: FindaPhD.com

For advice on using charity funding to finance your studies: <https://www.findaphd.com/funding/guides/phd-withoutscholarship.aspx>

International students looking to fund postgraduate study: <https://www.findamasters.com/funding/guides/international-mastersfunding-uk.aspx>

Government information on postgraduate loans: <https://www.gov.uk/funding-forpostgraduate-study>

To learn more about postgraduate study abroad: <https://targetpostgrad.com/advice/studying-abroad>

This publication is also available online – should you like to have it in an alternative format please contact us.

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