

**Guide to...  
Choosing  
and Funding  
Postgraduate  
Study**



# CONTENTS

1. Questions to consider when deciding on further study
2. Finding a course
2. Choosing a course
3. Types of postgraduate study courses
4. Fees and funding

This guide includes an overview of types of postgraduate courses, what to consider when making a decision to study at postgraduate level, how to research courses and ways to explore funding options. Also see our 'Guide to Postgraduate Study Applications, Personal Statements and Interviews'.

## QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER WHEN DECIDING ON FURTHER STUDY

### WHY?

Consider your reasons (see: **Should I do a masters?** and **Why do postgraduate study?**).

### IS IT REQUIRED FOR YOUR CHOSEN CAREER?

Research all routes into your chosen career.

### WILL EMPLOYERS VALUE IT?

Research what employers value more: a postgraduate qualification or relevant experience (see: **Value of a Masters to Employers**). Whilst postgraduate qualifications may increase long-term earnings (see: **Graduate Labour Market statistics**), this does not necessarily mean higher career starting salaries.

### WILL IT HELP YOU CHANGE YOUR CAREER?

Postgraduate study might be beneficial for those looking to change careers, but do research your chosen career to assess if this is the right route for you.

### WILL YOU ENJOY IT?

Research whether further study is for you by looking at course prospectuses, visiting universities, and speaking to course leaders and current students.

### IS IT AFFORDABLE?

Explore all potential funding options to fund your studies and consider the longer-term financial implications of repaying any loans (see section on 'Funding').

### WHEN?

Consider when you might want to undertake postgraduate study: straight after your degree, after a break from study, or while you are working? Consider the pros and cons with each option.

### HOW?

Postgraduate courses may be offered part-time or by distance learning.

### WHERE - UK OR ABROAD?

Consider: where you want to be based; living costs; fees and funding; your support network; and where you intend to establish your future career. For study abroad opportunities see: **Findamasters Study Abroad** and **Prospects Study Abroad**.

## FINDING A COURSE

Before selecting a course, do your research! As there is no one website advertising all postgraduate courses, we recommend using more than one search database;

- FindAMasters- **UK and international courses**
- Prospects- **Postgraduate courses**
- UCAS- **UCAS Postgraduate**
- Find a PhD- **PhD opportunities** and Find a Professional Doctorate- **Professional doctorates**
- Gov.uk- **Postgraduate teacher training**
- UCAS- **Performing Arts Conservatoires**
- Law Careers Net- **Postgraduate Law Courses**



## CHOOSING A COURSE

When narrowing your options, attend Postgraduate Open Days to talk to university representatives, course leaders, and current students.

### ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

Courses may require a specific degree subject, degree classification, and/or specific work experience, so check the university course page to find out.

### COURSE CONTENT

Does the course cover the specific subjects/modules you are interested in? Even courses with similar titles may be very different in content. Read course details and handbooks.

### PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION

If you know you need a professionally accredited postgraduate course for your chosen career (see: **Prospects Job Profiles**) ensure the course is appropriately accredited.

### CAREER OPPORTUNITIES

Consider if the course offers links with industry, teaching from industry and relevant placement opportunities. What have graduates from the course gone on to do?

### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Is the course delivered in your preferred teaching style/research methods? How will you be assessed? Do the facilities and resources meet your needs?

### REPUTATION

Are the university, course and academic teaching staff well regarded in your subject area (see: **FindAMasters Postgraduate Rankings**)?

### FUNDING

What repayable and non-repayable funding options do you have?

### METHOD OF STUDY

Full or part-time? In person on campus, distance or e-learning teaching? Consider the Open University for distance-learning courses (see: **Open University Courses**).

### PERSONAL CRITERIA

Consider any personal circumstances that may affect your choices.

# TYPES OF POSTGRADUATE STUDY

## TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE COURSES

### Postgraduate certificates and diplomas (taught) – Level 7

- PGCerts and PGDips are the same academic level as a master course, but differ in terms of course length, academic credits, and fees (see: **Prospects Postgraduate Diplomas & Certificates**).
- A postgraduate certificate (PgCert) requires 60 credits (15 weeks full-time study), with postgraduate diplomas (PgDip) requiring 120 credits (30 weeks' full-time study). PgCerts have lower fees.

### Masters degrees (taught) – Level 7

- Taught Masters have a similar structure to undergraduate degrees, involving lectures, seminars and practical work, with assessment by essays, exams, dissertations and group projects (see: **Which Masters degree is right for me?**).
- MA (Master of Arts) and MSc (Master of Science) courses are the most popular, but other options exist (e.g. MFA (Master of Fine Art), MEd (Master of Education) and MLitt (Master of Letters)).
- Teaching methods vary and study may be more independent compared to undergraduate degrees.

## RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE COURSES

### Masters degrees by research – Level 7

- Common research masters are MRes and MPhil (see: **Which Masters degree is right for me?**).
- An MRes may involve some taught modules, but with more emphasis on independent research.
- An MPhil is a research masters usually based entirely on independent project work. Some MPhils may be undertaken as a self-contained qualification or as a precursor to a PhD.
- Research masters suit students who work well independently and want their work published.

### Doctoral degrees – Level 8

- A PhD involves original subject research under academic supervision (see: **What is a PhD?**).
- The NewRoute PhD is a four-year course allowing students to learn different methods of research.
- Professional doctorate programmes provide qualifications for specific professional careers, for example, DClinPsy (Chartered Clinical Psychology) and DBA (Doctor of Business Administration).



# FEES AND FUNDING

## UK TUITION FEES

Tuition fees vary both across universities and within universities. Course costs depend on the university's reputation, the subject, and the type of postgraduate course. Check university websites for details.

## STUDY ABROAD TUITION FEES

Tuition fees vary greatly between countries and between types of universities (see: **Prospects Funding Study Abroad** and **Findamasters Study Abroad & Funding Guides**). Some countries (e.g. Australia and the USA) have very high fees, whereas many European countries have more affordable fees and living costs, compared to the UK. Check details of fees on university websites.

## SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE STUDY (UK)

- Postgraduate Funding (Prospects): **Overview of Postgraduate Funding**
- Masters Funding Options (findamasters): **Overview Masters Funding**
- Disabled Students' Allowance (DSA): **Direct Gov DSA Allowance** and **Prospects DSA**

### Masters Loans (Government backed)

Masters loans are non-means-tested, repayable postgraduate student loans. The amount you can borrow and eligibility criteria differs for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland (some UK countries may also fund for other postgraduate qualifications, such as postgraduate diplomas). For up-to-date information see: **Findamasters Government Loans** and **DirectGov Government Loans**.

### University Scholarships and Bursaries

Individual universities may offer non-repayable scholarships or bursaries to successful applicants. Check university websites to find out what they offer, eligibility criteria, and how to apply.

### Charitable Foundations and Trust Grant & Bursaries

Private and independent foundations and trusts may offer non-repayable grants and bursaries to those undertaking further study. The Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding includes a searchable database (see: **Charitable Postgraduate Funding**). Eligibility criteria, the amount of funding you can apply for, and application processes vary between foundations and trusts.

### Funding for Professional / Vocational qualifications

Some postgraduate courses designed for entry into specific career areas may offer alternative funding. Do your research and speak to universities about funding for your vocational postgraduate qualification.

## SOURCES OF FUNDING FOR RESEARCH-BASED POSTGRADUATE STUDY, INCLUDING PHD (UK)

- Postgraduate Funding (DirectGov): **Postgraduate Government Funding**
- PhD Funding (findaphd): **Funding for PhDs**
- Masters Funding Options (findamasters): **Overview Masters Funding**

### Masters Loans (Government backed)

Masters loans are non-means-tested, repayable postgraduate student loans. The amount you can borrow and eligibility criteria differs for England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. For up-to-date information see: **Findamasters Government Loans** and **DirectGov Government Loans**.

### PhD loans

Government-backed, non-means-tested PhD loans are currently available to those resident in England and Wales, supporting Doctoral students to finance tuition fees and living costs. The loan is paid to you in instalments and repayment is income contingent (see: **UK PhD Loans Scheme by FindaMasters**).

### Studentships

A studentship is a highly competitive non-repayable type of scholarship, mainly for Doctoral students, although some research master studentships may exist. It guarantees a partial or fully funded place on a PhD project. For information see: **PhD Scholarships** and check university websites directly.

### Research Council Funding

The UK's Research Councils provide funding opportunities for selected PhD and research-based master projects for UK students ordinarily resident in the UK. Research Councils don't fund students directly, but allocate a budget for studentships to universities (see: **Research Council Grants**).

### University & Charitable Scholarships & Bursaries

Individual universities may offer non-repayable scholarships or bursaries to research-based master and PhD students. Eligibility and application processes vary, so check university websites directly.

Individual charities may also offer non-repayable grants and bursaries to research-based master and PhD students. Funding is available from a wide range of charitable foundations and trusts, each with its own eligibility criteria, application process and award amounts (see: **Charitable Postgraduate Funding**).

---

Bath Spa Careers and Employability is here to help you get a great start to your career. We are open year round, so to find out more about how we can support you go to: [www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers](http://www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers)

As a student or recent graduate, *MyCareer* is your online portal for booking events, accessing appointments, submitting queries, and searching for jobs and placements.

You can also follow @bathspacareers on social media:  
**Facebook | Twitter | YouTube | LinkedIn | Instagram**

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this resource guide is accurate but we recommend that you check all details carefully.

The University is committed to the promotion of equality and diversity. If you require this publication in an alternative format, please go to *MyCareer* to submit a request via 'Questions'.

Published Summer 2021  
Copyright Bath Spa University Careers

