Guide to...
Postgraduate Study – Applications, Interviews & Funding
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Introduction

Postgraduate study is a great opportunity to research your chosen subject in more depth, to specialise in a particular sector and enhance your career. This guide, which includes information from the AGCAS resource ‘About postgrad study’, Prospects and TargetPostgrad webpages. It includes some hints and tips to consider when deciding if further study is for you.

This guide offers an overview to help you explore options for postgraduate study and includes links to additional resources and supporting documents to help you as you consider courses, funding and techniques for making effective applications. If you'd like to discuss your ideas and applications further then please look out for our workshops on postgraduate study options or arrange a careers appointment through bathspa.ac.uk/careers.

Questions to consider

Why?
Really think about what you want to achieve and what is going to keep you motivated for the duration of your studies.

Is it necessary?
If you are considering further study in order to join a particular profession, make sure you research all the routes into your chosen role so that you chose the right qualification or accreditation and gain the most appropriate experiences.

Will it help in the future?
For some careers, further study may be necessary, or it could demonstrate enhanced technical and transferable skills and a commitment to your subject. However a higher qualification will not automatically help you get into your chosen career. Graduate employers also value experience so it will be important to show them that you have gained other valuable skills through experiences as well as highlighting your postgraduate qualification. Postgraduate qualifications may increase long-term earnings, but this does not mean that they result in higher starting salaries.

Will you enjoy it?
Find out as much as you can about whether further study is for you by researching all of the options available. Look at course prospectuses, visit institutions and arrange to speak to tutors to see if the subject matter, teaching styles and research methods suit you. Talk to current postgraduate students about their experiences; ask about challenges and their top tips for success.

Is it affordable?
In order to undertake further study you will need to pay tuition fees alongside accommodation and living costs. Some funding for postgraduate study is available through loans, studentships, bursaries and grants. The government backed postgraduate loan was recently introduced to help Masters’ students with course fees and living costs. Most postgraduate students find that they need also need to consider ways to self-fund their studies and living costs. Individual institutions will be able to tell you if funding is available for a particular course or if they offer any financial advice and support for postgraduate students. As well as considering funding your studies in the short term, it will be important to think about any loans and costs that you will need to pay back after you graduate.

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Will it help you change your career?
Further study might be advisable if you want to get into a career that is not linked to your degree. There are a range of courses that will enable you to specialise. However, it’s also important to be aware that the majority of graduate employers do not necessarily require a specific degree or further qualifications. So before you choose to undertake postgraduate study, make sure that your new qualification will enable you to access new opportunities. You may be able to make a career change with your original qualification and your employment experience.

Further information

Should I do a Masters? - Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/should-i-do-a-masters

What can I do with my masters? – TargetPostgrad

Is postgraduate study right for you? - TargetPostgrad
http://targetpostgrad.com/advice/choosing-a-postgraduate-course/postgraduate-study-right-you

Why study postgraduate? – UCAS
www.ucas.com/postgraduate/why-study-postgraduate

‘Value of a Masters’ – findamasters.com

Returning to academia after a break – TargetPostgrad
When

Straight after your degree

If a course requires up-to-date knowledge and skills then signing up immediately after your undergraduate degree could be an advantage. It will also ensure that you don’t get out of the habit of studying.

After a break

Taking a break before postgraduate study can be an important way of developing skills and experience that will help to maximise the impact of your new qualification. Whether you take time out from your studies to work, travel or for other commitments, it will give you a chance to gain experiences to be a more attractive candidate to employers. For professional qualifications, such as those in social work and teaching, which often require a period of employment experience before you can even start the course, then experiences gained during a break from study are particularly valuable. Taking a break may mean that you will feel more refreshed and that you can save up and plan a budget to fund your studies.

While you are working

Many graduates continue in some sort of study or training when they have found employment. There are a number of flexible options which mean that you could study during the evenings and weekends or your employer may allow you to take study leave. Studying and working can support you to put theory into practice. It’s worth remembering that it can be very tiring to manage work and study, especially if you have other commitments, so you will need to be motivated and enthusiastic if you are going to succeed.

Where

The UK has one of the largest and most diverse postgraduate sectors in the world so it can be challenging to find the best place to study. Studying abroad might offer other advantages and so it’s worth considering this too. Consider what is important to you and what you want to achieve so that you can choose the best course and institution for you. This section has some tips on researching the various courses on offer in the UK and in other countries.

Finding a course

Before selecting a course it is important to research as wide a range of options as possible, not just those at your local university or where you currently study. There are lots of ways you can find out what courses are on offer. Courses in the same subject areas may have a wide range of titles so use a range of keywords when searching online. Some useful resources to help in researching courses:

Postgraduate course search databases – use a range to ensure that you maximize your research:

- www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-courses
- www.findamasters.com
- www.ucas.com/postgraduate
- https://targetpostgrad.com/search/postgraduate-courses
- www.postgrad.com/
Choosing a course

With the wide range of courses on offer it can be confusing when trying to make comparisons and to come up with a shortlist. Therefore it is important to give yourself plenty of time, take an organised approach to research and to get support when needed, to help you choose the course that works best for you.

You can start to narrow down your search by looking at whether you fit the course entry requirements. Some courses may require a specific degree result and/or specific work experiences. Next, consider some of these criteria to help you research and evaluate courses:

**Course content** - Does the course cover the specific subjects/modules you are interested in? Even when courses have similar titles they may be very different in content. If the course is a professional qualification, make sure it is accredited by the relevant professional body. If this is not clear then ask.

**Teaching and learning** - Does the course deliver options or specialist pathways that suit your specific interests? Is the course delivered in your preferred teaching style/research methods? How will you be assessed? Is there a good ratio of staff to students?

**Learning environment** - Are the facilities and resources of a good standard? Are there testimonials from students highlighting the quality and accessibility of resources?

**Reputation** - Is the university and the course you are considering well regarded, particularly for the area of study you will be undertaking? Are there specific academics and lecturers who contribute to the programme of study?
**Funding** – Are there any scholarships and bursaries available from the university? Are grants available from the Research Councils? Is advice available to support budgeting during your postgraduate studies?

**Career opportunities** – Does the course have industry input and do academics teaching on the course have good links with colleagues in industry? Are there opportunities to undertake work related experience and placements? What have graduates from the course gone on to do? Have they been successful in the workplace?

**Personal criteria** - Can you see yourself living in this university/location? Is there support to find accommodation? Can you still access support from family and friends easily? Can you link in with other students on the course before you start?

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**Researching your options**

When doing a more in-depth comparison of course options it’s important to undertake comprehensive research and to come up with a system that helps you to organise your thoughts and preferences.

Some ways you might research postgraduate courses include:

- Thoroughly researching course details and handbooks using the universities' webpages.
- Asking tutors at your present/previous institution for advice.
- Looking up courses on forums such as those on:
  - [www.postgraduateforum.com](http://www.postgraduateforum.com).
- Looking up reports from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education ([www.qaa.ac.uk](http://www.qaa.ac.uk)).
- Checking if courses are accredited by relevant professional bodies.
- Talking to representatives of the university by getting in touch or attending postgraduate open days.
- Visiting the institutions and talking to students and academics. Ask questions!
- Considering the use of league tables to compare universities and courses. You can find information about different league tables and additional advice about institutions using a range of websites.
  Examples include:
  - [https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/postgraduate/](https://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/postgraduate/).
- Visiting their careers services to ask what recent graduates have gone on to do. You can also ask if it is possible to speak to some graduates.
- Contacting alumni societies and student forums at institutions to find out more about what things are like.
- Considering other countries that you might like to study in.
Types of course

The two main types of postgraduate study; taught and research degrees. They cover a wide range of subject areas and can take a varying length of time to complete. It is worth noting that these are often further broken down into individual qualifications e.g. MSc (Master of Science), MA (Master of Arts), MRes (Master of Research) and MFA (Master of Fine Arts).

Masters degrees (taught)

- Taught Masters have a similar structure to undergraduate degrees. They involve lectures, seminars and practical work, with assessment through essays, exams, dissertations and group projects. You'll study independently while receiving close tutor support. A Masters degree gives you the opportunity to further your knowledge of a particular subject or study in a completely different area.

- Masters degrees are level 7 qualifications on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF); they are above Bachelors but below Doctoral qualifications. On completion of your Masters you will be awarded a distinction, merit or pass.

- MA and MSc courses may be offered in the same subject area. This is often because the approach to the subject is slightly different.

- A full-time Masters usually involves one or two years of study, while part-time programmes last between two and four years. Courses normally begin in September or October, although some start in January or February. Some Masters programmes also offer a distance learning option.

- You may have less contact time, but you'll be expected to undertake 30-35 hours of independent study. Teaching and accreditation methods vary, but the pace of a Masters is usually faster than an undergraduate degree.

Masters degrees by research

- Master of Arts (MA) and Master of Science (MSc) degrees are largely taught courses. Master of Research (MRes) contains some taught elements but places more emphasis on research expertise.

- Research Masters, particularly MRes degrees, typically suit students who work well independently, want their work published, are interested in a specific topic, or are planning to progress to PhD study.

- With MRes courses, typically, around two thirds of the course content consists of research project work. The focus is on developing an individual’s research skills and so can provide a good preparation for postdoctoral study. When studying for taught masters courses the research project will be nearer a third. A taught Masters programme is also a strong basis for moving onto a PhD.

- The MPhil is similar to a PhD but at a lower academic level. Most of the assessment is made on a single major research project which is shorter than a PhD thesis (typically 30,000 - 35,000 words). There may be some taught units and you will be supervised by an experienced academic.
It may be possible to gain a Masters degree whilst working with the Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP) scheme. This enables recently qualified graduates to work in a commercial environment, where they are paid a salary at an industrial rate, whilst studying for a higher degree. It involves managing a research project central to a company’s development, such as designing and introducing a new product, process or marketing strategy.

Postgraduate diplomas and certificates (taught)

- Both the diploma and the certificate are level 7 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) and are generally vocational. Courses often provide the professional qualifications needed for a specific career e.g. teaching or law.

- The key difference between the diploma and the certificate is that a postgraduate diploma is more extensive. A postgraduate certificate usually requires 60 credits (equivalent of 15 weeks full-time study). Postgraduate diplomas require that you gain 120 credits (equivalent of 30 weeks’ full-time study). Diplomas take around 6-12 months to complete on a full-time basis.

Conservatoires

- Conservatoire courses are available in music, dance, acting and theatre/screen production at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. They largely focus on practical tuition, performance experience and encouraging a great variety of creative influences and ideas – all backed up by academic study and professional development.

- Conservatoire courses are available at university levels, but within those levels there are different types of courses, different ways to study them and varying entry requirements.

- At postgraduate level you could study for a one or two year Masters (MMus, MA) or postgraduate diploma (PgDip) courses are available. Alternatively, there are research degrees which you can learn about and apply for directly with the conservatoires.

Doctoral degrees (PhD, DPhil)

- The best-known research qualification is the PhD, also known as the DPhil and is the highest level of degree that a student can achieve; Level 8 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). A PhD involves contributing new knowledge in a well-designed research project or thesis that is worthy of publication.

- Usually, you will need to achieve at least a 2:1 at undergraduate level to apply for Doctorate courses and many programmes will also require you to hold a Masters degree. This qualification is demanding and is best suited to those who have the commitment to build upon an excellent academic track record.

- Full-time courses usually last three years; with part-time courses usually lasting six years. During this time you will undertake original and significant research in a particular field or subject. You will receive support and guidance from others in your department and you will also have an academic supervisor.
• At the end of your PhD you will submit a publication-worthy thesis of 40,000 words up to 100,000 words long. There may be some taught units on research methods, but the PhD is awarded mainly on the quality and originality of the argument that is put forward as a result of your investigation. This ability to research independently and honestly, critically analyse and display intellectual maturity is highly valued within both academia and the workplace.

• You will also be encouraged to continuously share your findings and ideas with other academics and to present work at conferences.

• The majority of research degrees are taken at universities and other higher education (HE) institutions. However, there are some opportunities for studying in partnership with a university, in government laboratories, hospitals and research institutions.

• The NewRoute PhD is a four-year course which allows students to learn different methods of research. These build students' transferable skills, with training time balanced alongside independent study.

• It is also possible to study a Professional Doctorate which is geared towards students of more vocational subjects, such as education and engineering. They are often undertaken by those aiming for a career outside of academia and are usually supported by employers, who may offer students financial support.

Having a postgraduate qualification does not mean that you can expect to simply walk into a job. The job market in most professional and graduate fields is likely to be competitive. You will need to present a well-rounded package which includes academic achievement grades, contacts and employment experience. Before signing up for a course you should assess the future employment prospects in your chosen field.

**Further information on choosing a course and types of courses**

Types of postgraduate course – Prospects
https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study

Choosing a postgraduate course - TargetPostgrad
https://targetpostgrad.com/advice/choosing-postgraduate/choosing-a-postgraduate-course

Which Masters is right for me? - Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/which-masters-degree-is-right-for-me

Postgraduate diplomas and certificates – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate_qualifications_postgraduate_diplomas_and_certificates.htm

What is a PhD? – jobs.ac.uk
www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/studentships/1551/what-is-a-phd/

Why should you do a PhD? – jobs.ac.uk
https://www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/studentships/2221/why-should-you-do-a-phd

Advice about postgraduate course types – Postgrad.com
www.postgrad.com/advice/
Applying for postgraduate study (taught)

Gaining a place on the most popular postgraduate study options can be competitive and you will only be accepted if your application stands out. Above all, your application should show that you are genuinely committed to your area of study and that you will add value to the department and the university.

What does a typical application involve?

There is no central admissions system that covers all postgraduate courses. Most applications are made directly to a university or college through UKPASS. You can apply online and can apply to a number of institutions at the same time.

For postgraduate courses in teaching, law, music performance and social work, applications are made through specific processes.

It will be important to check application deadline dates and any specific requirements re: your undergraduate degree, evidence of skills or specific relevant work experience.

You will usually need to submit an application form with a personal statement, outlining your motivations for wanting to study and the skills that make you a suitable candidate (see page 14 for further top tips).

You may also need to submit examples of your written academic work or a portfolio and a CV. You will be asked to provide details of references. As the application process varies between institutions it is important to carefully check what the entry requirements and application process is for each course of interest.

Further information on application process

Applying for a Masters - Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/applying-for-a-masters-degree

Writing a winning application - TargetPostgrad
http://targetpostgrad.com/advice/choosing-a-postgraduate-course/how-write-a-winning-application-your-postgraduate-course
Applying for a PhD

Some students propose their own research area and apply for funding, while in some cases a supervisor may already have funding for a project and advertise it as a studentship (like a job).

As a potential applicant you should do as much preparation as possible and contact the department and/or supervising academic as soon as possible to discuss your ideas before taking your application further. Certain qualifications such as an upper second-class degree may be a minimum requirement.

When making an application, you may typically be asked to submit:

- a research proposal – outlining what you’re looking to investigate and the methodology you will use
- academic transcripts;
- two or three academic references;
- a personal statement;
- a portfolio;
- an academic CV;

Further Information

Masters application tips and advice – jobs.ac.uk
www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/masters-application-tips-advice.pdf (page 6)

PhD Study – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/phd-study

Applying for a PhD – FindaPhD.com
www.findaphd.com/advice/finding/phd-applications.aspx

Postgraduate Application timetable
https://targetpostgrad.com/advice/postgraduate-applications/postgrad-application-timetable

Preparing a PhD application blog – jobs.ac.uk
Practical considerations

Can I study part time?

There are hundreds of part-time courses available in the UK every year, taking place on campus or through distance learning and e-learning options. Part-time Masters normally take between two and five years to complete. Distance learning providers usually make resources available online, offer email and Skype support and you may need to attend residential or day workshops. Part-time courses are offered by a range of institutions and the Open University (www.open.ac.uk). Typically, you can search for courses using the same websites listing full time postgraduate courses offered through a university.

Can I afford to undertake further study or research?

Masters and PhD fees aren't fixed, and vary both across universities and within an institution. Course costs often depend on the university's reputation and the subject you intend to study. Careful consideration about funding will be important as you research courses and study options. See page 19 for funding information.

Should I study abroad?

Studying abroad offers many benefits. It provides new opportunities and often boosts your employability. Once you've decided that studying abroad is an option you’d like to consider, create a shortlist of countries, institutions and courses. Identify the best options by using university websites; talking to lecturers, tutors, researchers and the careers team.

Once you have started to narrow down your options, research them thoroughly to identify a course shortlist. It will be important to ask advice from your support network and only commit to study abroad when you know you feel fully ready and fully informed. Ask yourself practical questions, such as:

- Is your chosen country safe for international students?
- Do you want to live in the city, or are you looking for somewhere quieter?
- Will you fully embrace the student lifestyle abroad?
- Will you learn a new language?
- What are the tuition fees?
- What are the average living costs of country?
- Do you need to apply for a visa?

As well as undertaking your own research, many universities will then help you through the application procedure.

Masters study in the UK is very highly regarded by international students and employers alike. For more detailed information about postgraduates and their success in the labour market you can look at resources like ‘Graduate labour market statistics: 2018’ which includes annual salary comparisons for graduates and postgraduates.
Personal statement

Most applications for Masters programmes require a tailored personal statement and you are usually asked to name your referees or send a reference. You may also need to submit examples of your written academic work or a portfolio showcasing projects and pieces and/or a CV and you may be asked for a transcript of your undergraduate degree results with a module breakdown. As the application process varies between institutions make sure that you check what you need to do to apply very carefully.

Proving your commitment
Your application should show that you have a genuine enthusiasm for the subject and have carefully planned how you will use the qualification to further your career. Demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of each course and course provider and outline why they suit your skills, interests and aspirations.

Outlining your skills
You should demonstrate that you have the specific skills required to succeed on the course and in your career. Each time you approach a course provider, you should research the specific skills they require and tailor your application accordingly, giving specific examples. For example, if a university expects you to have excellent research skills, you could outline how you used a range of sources and checked your results during your undergraduate dissertation.

Provide recent and relevant examples
Provide evidence of relevant skills and demonstrate commitment required by the course provider/s you are approaching in a relevant way; don’t just focus on how much you like the subject.

Questions to consider for your personal statement/statement of purpose:

Why do you want to do the course/research?
Try to convey your enthusiasm and motivation for study/research. Write about any projects, modules dissertations or extended essays you have done if they are relevant or demonstrate relevant skills. Describe anything that shows creativity, dependability or independence.

Why this subject?
Be clear about why you have chosen this subject. Is the programme noted for a particular emphasis, speciality or orientation? When did you become interested in this field and what have you learned about it? What insights have you gained? How have you learned about this subject - through classes, seminars, work or conversations with academic staff?

What academic skills have you got to offer?
Have to developed specialist skills e.g. laboratory, computing, research and academic writing skills? Are you able to work independently? Have you developed research and analysis skills during your undergraduate studies?

Why this university?
Be specific – don’t make bland statements such as “Because you are an internationally-renowned university with an excellent academic reputation”. Is the programme noted for a particular specialism? Are there specific academic staff you want to do research or study with? What is it about the structure of the course, or the choice of modules, that appeals to you?
What personal skills can you offer?
Demonstrate that you've done your homework about the course/research you’re applying for and show that you’ve seriously considered your strengths and weaknesses for postgraduate study or research. If you have done jobs during the holidays, what skills have you learned: team working, communication, working under pressure?

What are your strengths?
Don’t be shy here; help the admissions tutor see your worth!

What is the relevance of your first degree to this study?
Highlight how your undergraduate studies are linked to studying at this higher level. Are there modules that you have already studied as an undergraduate that link with modules offered by the postgraduate course? Can you show relevant research experience by highlighting your dissertation topic and methodology?

What are your career aims?
You may not have a very clear focus on what you want to do longer term, but you may already have some ideas. By showing that you have some direction you will be able to demonstrate your commitment to do well in your studies and help the course leader see your motivations.

Top tips:
• Think about using an effective structure; make sure you include an introduction and a brief summary
• Try and use short paragraphs; be concise but specific
• Think about how you can create short dynamic sentences and fully utilise ‘action words’ to make your statement stand out.
• Make the course leader/admissions tutor or team feel special; tailor your statement for each course that you apply for. It is important to show your commitment to this course and university.
• It may sound obvious, but first impressions count for a lot so make sure that you triple check your statement to ensure there are no spelling or grammar mistakes.

Further Information for personal statement development

Postgraduate personal statement advice – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/personal-statements-for-postgraduate-applications

Masters application tips – jobs.ac.uk
www.jobs.ac.uk/media/pdf/careers/resources/masters-application-tips-advice.pdf

Writing a winning application – TargetPostgrad
https://targetpostgrad.com/advice/postgraduate-applications/how-to-write-a-winning-application-for-your-postgraduate-course

Kent University Careers team personal statement advice
www.kent.ac.uk/ces/student/furtherstudy.html?tab=personal-statements

Example personal Statement - Exeter Careers
www.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/careersandemployability/pdfs/pgstudy/pg_application_personal_statement_example.pdf
Example

Personal statement: MSc Psychology (Conversion) adapted from Prospects.ac.uk

I am currently in the third year of a degree in English language and linguistics. In the first year I selected a psychology module and realised that this is where my interest really lies. As well as a basic overview of different psychological approaches, I gained an insight into developmental psychology and language acquisition.

I continued this interest by taking a module in cognitive development. I was particularly fascinated by a study that compared the relative merits of the various theories used to try to explain Autistic Spectrum Disorder.

Now in my third year, I have decided on a practical-based dissertation that allows me to combine my interests in English language, linguistics and psychology. I have researched various methods to teach reading and have devised an experiment to evaluate these by testing how primary children improve their reading skills over a six-month period. This will involve statistical analysis of the recordings that I will make of the children reading aloud. I also hope to include some children with autism and some with learning difficulties such as dyslexia, to see if I can come to any conclusions about reading methods that may be effective for children with additional needs. Liaising with the school to set this up has helped me to develop my negotiation skills, while interacting with the pupils has helped me to develop confidence in communicating at an appropriate level with children.

Prior to my degree, I studied three A-levels. Maths developed my skills in logical thinking, and I have found that I have an aptitude for statistical analysis. I also studied biology and although I am more interested in human interaction, I enjoy the scientific approach to devising and conducting experiments, collecting data, recording and analysing results and coming to a logical conclusion.

Before starting my degree I took a gap year. I worked as a temporary teaching assistant in a primary school assisting in a Year 5 class. I developed my confidence in managing small groups of pupils and in finding creative ways to engage them. I followed this with a role as a learning mentor in a secondary school. I worked one-to-one with a year 8 student with autism. I learnt a great deal about the challenges that schools face in integrating pupils with special educational needs and also about my own ability to be patient and supportive.

Recently, I shadowed an educational psychologist for a day to confirm that I had a realistic understanding of how psychology is used in a real job role. This included sitting in on an assessment of a child with behavioural difficulties with his parents present. I was able to see how a range of different assessments were utilised and experience how the educational psychologist diplomatically handled the parents’ reactions and emotions. I was then able to arrange a further day of shadowing after the educational psychologist had completed her report and sat in on an action planning meeting where the child’s personal tutor and the school learning support tutor were also present. After getting an inside view of the pros and cons of the job, I came away more convinced that this is the career I want to pursue.

I decided to choose [XX University] because of the large number of tutors with research interests in developmental psychology. I was interested to read some of the research conducted by the developmental psychology research group into school bullying and bi-lingual learners. At the psychology department open day I was impressed by the video observation laboratory and perception lab. I like the emphasis on learning practical research methods, such as designing experiments and questionnaires. Although I know that most of the modules are compulsory as required by the British Psychological Society (BPS), I am interested in the electives you offer - particularly educational psychology and developmental dyslexia.

I regularly read Psychology Review and was particularly interested in a recent article on the social and emotional needs of pupils with dyslexia, and how conclusions from recent research have been fed back to schools through the educational psychology service. I am a keen rower and, since I represent the university, this is a huge commitment. It has taught me a great deal about teamwork, which I feel will be very beneficial to working in a collaborative role. I have also had to learn to manage my time effectively.

My future plan is to gain some experience of teaching English abroad, before applying for a Doctorate in educational psychology. I am enthusiastic about taking the first step to a professional career in psychology.
Interview

Getting an interview means that you have successfully demonstrated your ability in your application. The interview is designed to further examine your skills and commitment and to see how you would fit in to the institution/course. Some typical questions are shown below:

**Why do you want to study this subject/course/research programme?**

Build on your personal statement; show your enthusiasm and passion for the subject. Make reference to relevant modules, projects or a dissertation from your undergraduate study, which have encouraged you to develop your interest further. If you have a career aim, show how the course will help you to achieve this.

**Why this university/college?**

Demonstrate that you are familiar with the research strengths of the department and how it is regarded in the academic community. You should also highlight any specific aspects of the course that you find particularly attractive, such as how it is structured, its range of study options, methods of assessment or the quality of its facilities. If you already study at the university, present this as a positive feature.

**What skills can you offer?**

Before your interview you should be fully aware of your academic and transferable skills. Take time to think about these and to identify examples of when and where you have developed these skills. You should also identify the specific competencies each course provider is seeking. You could find out this information by researching their website, by talking to them or looking through postgraduate forums.

**What do you intend to do on completing this course?**

You should be able to clearly outline why you are applying and how you plan to use the qualification. Even if you do not have a clear career objective, sharing some direction will show that you are serious.

**How do you intend to fund your study?**

Check out any possible sources of funding, including from the university, well ahead of time to see if you are eligible. Be prepared to show how you would fund a course (particularly if you are not successful in additional funding applications).

**Which part of your degree course did you enjoy the most?**

Demonstrate your genuine enthusiasm for the study and research you will be undertaking. Promote the aspects of your undergraduate study where you excelled and demonstrate how this influenced your interest. Show that you have researched the subject and course you hope to study.

**What do you feel are the main differences between undergraduate and postgraduate study?**

This is your chance to show that you have the skills and qualities needed for independent research and study. Demonstrate that you understand that postgraduate study involves taking a more proactive attitude to study, including independent reading, critical thinking, time management, problem solving and tenacity.
Why should we accept you?

This question gives you the chance to use a prepared answer. State your strengths, skills and relevant experiences, putting them in the order that creates the best impression.

For PhD interviews

The “right” answers to PhD interview questions are personal, and depend greatly on what the specific staff members and their programme or department want. As above, this means doing thorough research to find out as much as possible about the research opportunity and then considering how your own interests, skills and abilities can contribute to this. Ensure that you have researched the department’s mission statement, and information about current staff research to learn about research priorities, interests, and positions in theoretical debates.

Consider your motives for doing postgraduate research and think about the actual task of doing an extended research project of this type should you be offered a place. Carefully consider, and be prepared to discuss, your individual motives as to why a supervised research project is right for you. For many students it is a substantial financial and personal commitment.

Showcase your personal skills and attributes, and how well they fit with this research. Honestly consider and analyse your areas of academic strength and weakness - critically reflect upon your own skills, both academic and technical. You should be prepared to both sell relative strengths and admit relative weaknesses at interview.

Take the opportunity to find out as much as you can and think of ways to make your interview a 2 way conversation. Prepare several informed questions about the research they do. Ask about available resources, postgraduate, or other ‘events’ suitable for research students. If you are new to the institution, ask if you can have a tour either before or after interview.

Further information on preparing for postgraduate study interviews

Postgraduate interview questions – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/postgraduate-interview-questions

10 PhD interviews questions and crucial tips - jobs.ac.uk
www.jobs.ac.uk/careers-advice/studentships/2258/top-10-phd-interview-questions-and-crucial-tips

The PhD interview - FindaPhD.com
https://www.findaphd.com/advice/finding/phd-interview.aspx

PhD interview questions - FindaPhD.com
https://www.findaphd.com/advice/finding/phd-interview-questions.aspx

PhD interview Do’s and Don’ts - Postgrad.com
https://www.postgrad.com/advice/phd/interview_dos_and_donts/

If you would like some help to prepare or practice for an interview you can access a range of resources or contact the careers team to book an appointment via bathspa.ac.uk/careers.
Fees and funding

It is very important to research funding options and sources in good time to plan for how you will meet the costs of gaining additional qualifications.

Tuition fees

- Specific details of fees can be found on the postgraduate pages of university websites or in postgraduate prospectuses.
- You are also, often, eligible for a discount in fees if you study at the same institution where you completed a previous degree.

UK living costs

- These include accommodation, general living costs such as food, utility bills, travel, the internet, and course materials.
- Bear in mind that the cost of living varies according to geographical area, for example in or outside London. Some universities give information on projected living costs on their websites.

Studying Abroad

Overseas tuition fees vary greatly. Some countries, including Australia and the USA, set very high fees for international students. Degrees in others, such as China and Taiwan, are much more affordable. Discuss funding options with your chosen university. As with postgraduate study in the UK, you’ll need to research living costs as well as considering visa requirements and additional costs like travel insurance.

Potential sources of funding for postgraduate study (taught)

- Masters loans (government backed)
- Scholarships and bursaries
- Employer sponsorship
- Full time work and part time study
- Full time study and part time work
- Crowdfunding
- Disability related funding

There is more up to date information available about these funding options on the Prospects and Find a Masters webpages; see links in ‘Further Information’.
Postgraduate loans

Masters loans are non-means-tested, repayable postgraduate student loans which are similar to those that are offered to undergraduate students. There are variations to consider for students from England, Wales and Scotland and so it will be important to research options and to check your individual course and loan eligibility. As an example, for the 2019/20 academic year, in England, students are able to borrow any amount up to a maximum of £10,906.

As the money goes directly to the student, you can spend the postgraduate loan on tuition fees, living expenses or other study-related costs.

Almost all full-time Masters degrees are eligible, providing that they last no longer than two years. You are also eligible for the loan if you study part-time and distance learning courses as long as these are not more than twice the length of any full-time equivalent. Again, it will be important to carefully research options and check your individual course and circumstances in relation to loan eligibility and conditions.

It will also be important to use resources available through e.g. Prospects and FindaMasters.com to keep up to date for full details of eligible courses and criteria depending on where you live.

Other funding

Students may also be eligible for employer sponsorship or institutional scholarships. Always ensure that you check whether there are any conditions attached to your chosen method of funding. Although Masters study is demanding, some students balance full time study with part-time work. Other students opt to study part time and also work.

Researching and considering realistic funding options may involve formulating a ‘back up’ plan too.

Further Information about funding options

UK Postgraduate loans application guides- Findamasters.com
www.findamasters.com/funding/guides/postgraduate-loan-apply.aspx
With details of English loans, Welsh loans, Scottish loans and loan for Northern Ireland.

Postgraduate funding information – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm

Postgraduate loans - Directgov
www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study

A to Z of funding options – TargetPostgrad
https://targetpostgrad.com/advice/funding-advice

Understanding postgraduate funding – TargetPostgrad
http://targetpostgrad.com/funding/faqs-getting-grips-funding

The ultimate postgraduate funding guide – Postgrad.com
www.postgrad.com/fees_and_funding/funding/postgraduate_student_funding_guide/
Scholarships and Bursaries - Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study_scholarships_and_bursaries.htm

Searchable database of alternative funding sources available to Bath Spa students – ‘Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding’ (‘Register for a username & password’ using your Bath Spa email address (option 1))
www.postgraduate-funding.com/gateway

Search for studentships (Masters & Taught) – Postgraduatescholarships.co.uk
www.postgraduatescholarships.co.uk/

Scholarship search
www.scholarship-search.org.uk/

Grants and education funding information -
www.moneysavingexpert.com/family/grants-education

Funding options for postgraduate study by country - Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/study-abroad

Fees and funding options by country – TargetPostgrad
https://targetpostgrad.com/advice/studying-abroad

Potential sources of funding for PhDs

- Studentships
- PhD loans (available from 2018/19)
- Scholarships and bursaries (such as the Graduate Teaching Assistantship)
- Research Council grants
- Employer sponsorship
- Crowdfunding

Course fees in the UK vary. Scholarships and loans are available and will need to be carefully researched. The UK’s seven Research Councils provide funding opportunities for selected projects.

A PhD studentship is a highly competitive scholarship for Doctoral students, guaranteeing them a partially or fully funded place on an often pre-determined PhD project. Studentships are normally advertised on university department websites as and when they come up, so it’s important to keep a constant eye out for them.

It will be important to use resources available through on e.g. Prospects and FindaPhD.com to keep up to date for full details of potential funding options. See links in ‘Further Information’.

PhD loans

These government-backed, non-means-tested PhD loans was introduced in 2018/19 academic year, helping Doctoral students to finance tuition fees and living costs. As an example, for the 2019/20 academic year, in England, eligible students are able to borrow any amount up to a maximum of £25,700.
The money is provided by the UK Government and is paid to you in instalments. Repayments are income-contingent and are made when you are earning over £21,000 a year. You can currently get a PhD loan if you’re an English or Welsh-resident student studying in the UK or an EU student coming to study in England or Wales.

**Further Information about funding options**

UK PhD loans application guide - FindaPhD.com
www.findaphd.com/funding/guides/uk-phd-loans-scheme.aspx

Postgraduate funding information – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm

PhD Loans update – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/funding-postgraduate-study/phd-loans

PhD loans – Directgov
www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study

Searchable database of alternative funding sources available to Bath Spa students – ‘Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding’ (‘Register for a username & password’ using your Bath Spa email address (option 1))
www.postgraduate-funding.com/gateway

Search for studentships (PhDs) – Postgraduatescholarships.co.uk
www.postgraduatescholarships.co.uk/

Research Council Grants – Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study_research_council_grants.htm

Research funding - Vitae
www.vitae.ac.uk/researcher-careers/pursuing-an-academic-career/research-funding

**Further Support from Bath Spa Careers**

If you would like further support from Bath Spa Careers & Employability go to bathspa.ac.uk/careers to see the ways in which you can access our service, including workshops and events, appointments and to access our extensive range of resources.

You can also contact Careers Reception on 01225 875525 or at careers@bathspa.ac.uk.

Please note that Bath Spa Careers does not endorse particular organisations.

(This guide was last updated in Summer 2019).
GET A HEAD START

We’re here to help you get a great start to your career. We’re open all year round, so come and visit us in the Careers Space, book an appointment, or get in touch.

Careers Space, SL.G04
Steward’s Lodge

careers@bathspa.ac.uk
01225 875525

www.bathspa.ac.uk/careers

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

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