Postgraduate Study

This sheet provides information on the factors to consider when thinking about taught postgraduate study, including how to find courses, studying abroad, how to write a personal statement and funding.

Why go on to postgraduate study?
There are a number of reasons why you might consider further study following your undergraduate degree:

- You might enjoy your subject and wish to study it in more depth
- You may need to gain a specific qualification so that you can enter a particular career
- You may be considering a research degree with a view to an academic/research career
- You might feel it will help you to get a better job. If this is the case then it is a good idea to research the area of work in which you are interested, to clarify if the additional qualification is necessary.

What course could you do?
Taught courses include:

- **Academic courses** which may build on your degree or which involve studying a subject using an academic/theoretical approach
- **Vocational courses** which offer the qualifications essential for entry to certain professions, eg PGCE (for teaching); MA Social Work; GDL (for law); Doctorate in Clinical Psychology, etc. These courses often include opportunities for practical experience
- There are also what might be referred to as “semi vocational” courses – these may not be essential for entry to particular careers, but might well improve your prospects, especially in the longer term. Check with the industry/employers as to whether this will be the case, eg Heritage Management, Marketing, International Development, Social Research Methods etc.

How/when to study
Consider whether to do postgraduate study immediately after completing a first degree, or whether to return to study after or during a period of employment. Many courses can be studied part time or by distance/e-learning - options which may allow you to work while studying.

**International students** should refer to [www.york.ac.uk/careers/international](http://www.york.ac.uk/careers/international) (click on the Further study tab); and [www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate_study.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate_study.htm) (click on Studying Abroad, then UK); and [www.ukcisa.org.uk](http://www.ukcisa.org.uk) for further information.

**Studying outside the UK**
There are a number of reasons why you may choose to undertake further study outside the UK – the opportunity to develop another language; experience another culture; gain valuable experience; gain access to different opportunities; potentially pay less in fees.

However, studying overseas can present other considerations, including issues about the practicalities of studying and living in another country. For information about studying in Europe and beyond, visit [http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/home_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/ploteus/home_en.htm) and [www.prospects.ac.uk/studying_abroad.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/studying_abroad.htm)
Searching for Courses

In the UK: Use the course search facility on www.prospects.ac.uk (under the Postgraduate study tab). As well as searching for courses by subject, you can also explore profiles of the universities and the departments you’re interested in. Other useful sites include www.postgrad.hobsons.com and www.findamasters.com

Outside the UK: To find out about courses overseas, you can look on websites for specific universities. For study in Europe visit www.mastersportal.eu or www.eurograduate.com/postgrad_search.asp and www.studyineurope.eu; fellowship programmes are listed in the Jobs section of Euraxess http://ec.europa.eu/euraxess/.

Choosing where to study
Your research should include:
- The entry requirements – do you need specific qualifications and/or experience?
- The specialism of the university and the academics working there
- Graduate destinations
- Links with industry/work placement opportunities
- Possibilities of funding

Funding Masters study in the UK
It is often much easier to gain a place for postgraduate study than to gain funding. Tuition fees vary according to the type of study undertaken and the institution. You’ll also need to consider living costs as well, which will change according to the nature and location of the institution you attend. Grants and awards may be made for some courses, but their availability will vary.

Some of the main ways to fund postgraduate study include:
- For 2016/17 loans of up to £10,000 will be available for postgraduate courses at UK universities. You can find out more at http://www.findamasters.com/funding/guides/new-uk-postgraduate-loans-scheme.aspx
- Universities have some bursaries available – details and conditions vary so check out the details at the university you hope to attend. Some funding is merit based and some may be means tested
- Alternative Postgraduate Funding Guide www.postgraduate-funding.com/gateway (free access to York students)
- Charitable organisations and trusts for people who meet specific criteria. For an A-Z list of charities see www.turn2us.org.uk/grants_search.aspx
- Employers sometimes fund employees or give financial support towards relevant qualifications (check individual employer websites/ graduate training schemes for details)
- Career Development Loans (www.gov.uk/career-development-loans)
- Part time employment – depending on the demands of your course it may be possible to combine part time work with your study, or you may have the option of studying on a part time basis for a longer period while working.

Prospects Postgraduate Funding Guide contains detailed information on sources of funding and you can find this online at: https://www.prospects.ac.uk/prospects-publications

There is also useful information and details of funding at:
- www.postgraduatefunding.com
- www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/funding-postgraduate-study
- www.postgraduatestudentships.co.uk
- www.scholarship-search.org.uk
Funding for International students:
- [www.educationuk.org/global/](http://www.educationuk.org/global/)
- [www.postgrad.com/editorial/fees_and_funding/funding/](http://www.postgrad.com/editorial/fees_and_funding/funding/)

Funding study outside the UK
There are a number of ways of funding study overseas, with a range of scholarships, awards and fellowships. Sourcing funding can be a time consuming process and early research of your options and early applications are important. See [www.prospects.ac.uk/studying_abroad.htm](http://www.prospects.ac.uk/studying_abroad.htm) for further sources of funding and [www.iefa.org](http://www.iefa.org) to search for international financial aid and scholarships.

[www.postgrad.com/editorial/fees_and_funding](http://www.postgrad.com/editorial/fees_and_funding) has information on researching universities in Europe, including funding and they offer some funding bursaries that students can apply to. The European Funding Guide also has information for study at an EU institution. For study in the US see [www.fulbright.org.uk/](http://www.fulbright.org.uk/)

Making your application
There is no central admissions system which covers all postgraduate courses and generally there are no official closing dates for receipt of applications (but see below for exceptions to some vocational courses). Some institutions may set a deadline for applications for places or for applications to be considered for funding, so check carefully how and when to apply.

Many applications for postgraduate opportunities require a personal statement, or supporting letter. This allows you to show your motivation and enthusiasm for a course and your understanding of the subject to be studied. The personal statement may be incorporated into the application form and have a strict word or space limit or you may be asked to write a separate statement with no limit on length indicated. If this is the case then one side of A4 is usually ideal.

The content of your personal statement should be tailored to the course to which you are applying – select only that information which is relevant.

Applying for vocational courses
Vocational courses provide training for a specific profession or type of work. Applications to some courses (teacher training, social work, law, medicine, clinical psychology and nursing) are made via a clearing house and will often have a set closing date. The advantage of this centralised system is that it allows you to apply for a number of courses using a single application form. Clearing house applications usually feature a section for a personal statement. If the courses to which you are applying do not recruit through a clearing house then you must make separate applications to all the courses in which you are interested and follow the instructions regarding personal statements.

When you apply to a vocational course you are not just applying to a course of study, you are applying for the training that will allow you to enter a specific field of work. You must convince admissions tutors not only of your academic abilities, but also of your enthusiasm for the career and your reasons for wishing to enter it. They need to be satisfied that you are ready for the career that you have chosen and that you have a realistic idea of the demands of the profession.

An effective personal statement should include the following:
- Why you are interested in this type of work and why you think you will enjoy it and gain job satisfaction. What has influenced your decision, how your ideas have developed and what research you have carried out to confirm your interest in this career
• Why you feel that you are suited to it. Include details such as relevant skills and personal qualities – provide brief details of evidence to support your assertions
• Details of any relevant work experience (paid and unpaid) which you have undertaken and what you have learned from it
• The relevance of your degree to the course to which you are applying. Sometimes this will be obvious, in which case you should highlight particularly relevant modules, research projects or dissertation topics. If it is less obvious then you must demonstrate why you believe it is relevant, by highlighting some of the specific topics studied and skills gained throughout the course
• Mention any extra-curricular activities and interests that are relevant to your application
• Indicate your knowledge of the career area and demonstrate that you have a realistic understanding of the nature of the work
• Mention your long term career plans/specific areas of interest (eg if you are applying to social work you might mention an interest in working with children and families)

Applying for non-vocational courses
Applications to ‘academic’ taught courses (Masters) should explain your interest in the subject and demonstrate the relevance of your previous studies and how they have prepared you for the course to which you are applying. However, do provide other details where they are relevant - for example, a year in industry as part of a science degree will be relevant to an application for a postgraduate science programme, and time spent doing voluntary work in a developing country will be relevant to courses in Development Studies. The following points should be covered in a personal statement:
• Your reasons for applying to the course. Explain your interest, perhaps highlighting particular features of the course such as specific modules or electives if appropriate. You will need to convince admissions tutors of your enthusiasm for the subject and your desire to learn more
• Highlight the relevance of your previous studies. Mention (as appropriate) specific modules/topics studied, research projects undertaken, dissertation topics, literature reviews, poster presentations, field trips, laboratory skills, IT skills, time spent abroad (particularly for language students), work placements, etc. You could also give an indication of your marks/grades to date (if known)
• Why you are applying to the specific institution (eg reputation of the department, recommended by your current lecturers, staff whose interests reflect your own, reputation/quality of the teaching and research)
• An indication of your career aspirations
• An indication of your research interests and ability (particularly if the course includes a dissertation)

Finally, if you would find it helpful to obtain a second opinion on your personal statement speak to a Careers Consultant at a careers appointment. You can book an appointment online through Careers Gateway at www.york.ac.uk/careers/gateway. You may also find it helpful to consult a member of the academic staff in your department for advice.

Useful resources
Reference books and journals in Careers
• The Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding
• University Scholarships, Awards and Bursaries
• Grants for History
• Studying Abroad
• The Study Abroad Handbook
Websites

- [www.york.ac.uk/careers/study](http://www.york.ac.uk/careers/study) – York profiles and mentors where alumni share their experiences of further study
- [www.york.ac.uk/careers/profiles](http://www.york.ac.uk/careers/profiles) - York profiles and mentors where alumni share their experiences of further study
- [www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk/](http://www.academiccareer.manchester.ac.uk/) - information and advice on how to build a career in academia, different sections tailored to whether you are an undergrad, masters student, PhD student or post-doc researcher
- [www.themedicportal.com/](http://www.themedicportal.com/) - information and help for getting into medical school

**Please note:** The websites listed here are not intended to represent a comprehensive list. *Careers* cannot be held responsible for the content of external websites.