

## Considering Postgraduate Study

Undertaking a postgraduate qualification can be a great option. It can enable you to study an aspect of your subject in more detail, essential if you want to pursue an academic career. Alternatively it could allow you to gain a vocational or conversion qualification, that could give you credibility to enter a career area where your current degree is not directly relevant.

However, there is a great deal to consider and it is important to research your chosen career diligently to ensure that the qualification is the right one to help you meet your objectives and will be respected by potential recruiters.

### When and how do I apply?

You might want to continue straight from your degree to keep up the momentum of studying. You will need to apply from the start of Autumn Term for some popular vocational courses e.g. teaching qualifications (PGCEs), law conversions etc. Although some other courses may have places a month before they start. Many vocational courses e.g. journalism, counselling, teaching etc. will require you to have relevant experience and if you haven't you may need to consider time out before applying. Time out to gain experience can be ideal for checking that this is the right career for you, and gives you some extra time to work to fund your future studies. Increasingly students are choosing to study part-time so they can work too. If you wish to study abroad it can take 18 months for the application process so this means you will have to apply during your second year or take a year out.

The majority of courses require you to apply to them individually rather than through a central body such as UCAS so this means you can target your application towards that specific course. Demonstrate you have done your research on key elements of the programme and that you are excited about the course. Every university wants motivated students and can spot a student applying for the sake of avoiding working for another year. Nearly all courses will require students to attend an interview. Come into Careers for advice on applications and interviews.

### What can I study?

When you start researching postgraduate courses it can be confusing as there is a vast choice on offer. It can seem overwhelming trying to work out what the differences are.

**Masters in Art (MA) Masters in Science (MSc)** - these can be taught or research based courses typically lasting a year and looking in-depth at a topic or subject area. You can then undertake a dissertation (or research project). In most cases a 2i is required, but not always. A 2i is often necessary to secure funding from Research Councils (if funding is available).

**Postgraduate certificates/diplomas (PGDip, PG Cert)** - can either be a vocational qualification but often these are like Masters but without the dissertation element (therefore cheaper). Usually a 2ii is the minimum requirement but not always.

**PG Certificate in Education (PGCE)** - this is a teaching qualification, qualifying students to teach in either Primary or Secondary schools (FE option available). A taught course with placements in school, students

Access this page and more coaching topics at [reading.ac.uk/careers/resources](https://reading.ac.uk/careers/resources)

must pass both parts to qualify. Students need at least a 2ii but this may rise to 2i. There are now many opportunities to train to teach so take time to check which option is best for you. Have a look at the '[Get into Teaching](#)' section on the DfE website for more information.

**Masters in Business Administration (MBA)** - a vocational programme which traditionally required substantial work experience before students could enrol but this is no longer the case at all universities. See the league table on the Association of Business School's website or the FT site for World Rankings.

**Masters in Research (MRes)** - a relatively new one year qualification that aims to prepare students for further research at Doctoral level. A 2i is normally required. The course focuses on teaching research methodology relevant to the subject area. They can be directly linked to a PhD option so on successful completion students move on to start their PhD at the same institution or choose to leave it with their MPhil. The dissertation is weighted higher than on MAs.

**Masters in Philosophy (MPhil)** - similar to an MA or MSc but often with a larger dissertation or research project attached. Like the MRes a 2i is usually required and can also be directly linked to a PhD option so on successful completion students move on to start their PhD at the same institution or choose to leave it with their MPhil.

**Doctor of Philosophy (PhD, DPhil)** - some doctoral programmes will have a taught element but the focus is on producing a piece of research (at least 40,000 words) that is worthy of publication. It aims to inform the research in the chosen area of research.

### Where to find the courses and how to choose?

Most postgraduate courses are listed on [Prospects](#), [FindAMasters](#) and [FindAPhd](#) with listings of options in the UK and also abroad. Check with any potential professional body who may accredit some courses e.g. [National Council Training for Journalists](#), [British Council for Counselling & Psychotherapy](#) etc. If you want to pursue one relevant to your subject, talk to academic tutors and look at current journals to see who is actively researching in that topic. Talk to current postgraduates by attending Open Days and compare module choice between different institutions. Ask universities what their previous students have gone on to do; they all have to collate these results.

### Funding

Funding for postgraduate study can often be the stumbling block for many students. Courses typically cost from £3,000 per year – prestigious Masters can cost £10-15,000 and MBAs even more. Hence some students opt to study part-time so they can work at the same time. Start by asking universities how previous students have funded the course and ask to be considered for any potential funding that might be available. Some courses will have funding from [Research Councils](#) who get their funding from the government. Other students are able to get some funding from charities or Grant Making trusts for advice on these see the specialist advice on [Prospects](#).

### What to do now

- Identify what courses might be relevant for you and think of the "pros and cons" for your situation.
- Find out as much as possible about the course you'd like to do, what do the current students think, what is the university's research history like, how have previous students paid for it?
- Come and talk your ideas through with a Careers Consultant and get a plan together to help you succeed.

Access this page and more coaching topics at [reading.ac.uk/careers/resources](https://reading.ac.uk/careers/resources)

**EXPLORE** your options