

Postgraduate study

With bank overdrafts and student loans to pay off, further study may look like an unaffordable luxury. In fact many graduates turn to postgraduate courses as their best option in a period of global recession where clocking up further skills and qualifications is a good idea.

What are postgraduate courses and what are they used for?

There are four main types of postgraduate qualification:

- Postgraduate certificates and postgraduate diplomas. These may be academic or vocational qualifications and are often linked to a specific profession. They may lead on to further study, such as a masters degree.
- Masters degrees, these can be taught courses, research based or a mixture of both, and require at least 12 months of full-time study to complete. They include academic qualifications such as MA (master of arts), MSc (master of science) and MPhil (master of philosophy) or can be linked to a particular career or profession such as MBA (master of business administration), LLM (master of law) and MEd (master of education).
- Doctorate qualifications (PhD or Dphil) require you to independently plan and undertake an original piece of research with guidance from a supervisor. They usually take at least three years of full-time study to complete.

Whichever you choose, the ultimate goal will be to acquire more specific skills and knowledge, and to move from the broad areas of a first degree to focus on a more specific detail or application. This may be within your current department, or at another university or in conjunction with employment or an internship.

Information on specific courses

Currently there are more than 58,000 postgraduate courses in the UK delivered through full time, part time, block and distance learning. The new postgraduate website, where you can search and apply for courses, is UKPASS (UK Postgraduate Application and Statistical Service).

www.ukpass.ac.uk

www.masterscompare.co.uk

Funding

Unlike undergraduate study there are no government student loans or routine bursaries. However bursaries do exist and the best place to ask is often the office of the academic department to which you are applying.

Many students divide their life between working part time and studying part time, this may be a formal internship or an informal arrangement. The following websites provide general information about funding for postgraduate study:

www.postgraduatestudentships.co.uk

www.prospects.ac.uk/funding

www.gov.uk/career-development-loans/overview

www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study

Research grants

Each year the UK Research Councils (RCUK) invest a total of around £2.8 billion in research, covering the full spectrum of academic disciplines from the medical and biological sciences to astronomy, physics, chemistry and engineering, social sciences, economics, environmental sciences and the arts and humanities. Their website has information about postgraduate and post doctoral research grants at: www.rcuk.ac.uk and also links to the seven separate research council websites:

- The Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) for research funding and training in economic and social sciences:
www.esrc.ac.uk or
www.esrcsocietytoday.ac.uk
- Arts and Humanities Research Council:
www.ahrc.ac.uk
- Medical Research Council:
www.mrc.ac.uk
- Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council
www.bbsrc.ac.uk
- Science and Technology Facilities Council
www.stfc.ac.uk
- Natural Environment Research Council
www.nerc.ac.uk
- Engineering & Physical Sciences Research council
www.epsrc.ac.uk

Other useful sites

Some professions have their own specific application site for postgraduate courses. These include:

The graduate teacher training registry for teaching:

www.gtr.ac.uk

The Conservatoires UK Admissions Service (CUKAS) for music performance:

www.cukas.ac.uk

Clinical psychology:

www.leeds.ac.uk/chpccp