

## About postgrad study

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### Why do postgraduate study?

Postgraduate study is an opportunity to research your chosen subject in more depth and enhance your career. This section outlines the factors you need to consider when choosing a course and deciding when to go back into higher education (HE).

### What to consider

- **Why you want to take up further study.** Before you make a decision about postgraduate study you need to clarify your motives and what it is you want to achieve. People sign up for further study for a number of reasons including an interest in the subject, to gain a career advantage, or because it is necessary in a particular occupation.
- **Will you enjoy it?** Before you sign up for a course, research all your options to find the right one for you. Look at the prospectus, visit the institution and talk to the tutors to see if the subject matter, teaching styles and research methods are what you are looking for. If you are considering a research post such as a PhD, talk to current Doctoral students about their experiences, and make sure you get on with your proposed supervisor before you agree to the post.
- **Can you afford it?** Further study can be very expensive and far less funding is available than for undergraduate courses. Some postgraduate students are sponsored but most have to save up the fees or get a loan. The institutions you are considering will be able to tell you if sponsorship is available. Before getting a loan on top of your other student debts, assess whether you will be able to pay it back after you graduate.
- **Will it improve your career prospects?** Further study may be necessary to enter your chosen career, or it could be used to demonstrate enhanced technical and transferable skills and a commitment to your subject. Do not assume that a higher qualification will automatically help you get into your chosen career, however. Many graduate employers look more favourably on experience than additional qualifications. Show employers that you have other valuable skills, such as time management, presentation skills, critical thinking and teamwork. Emphasise any relevant work experience you have gained on your CV alongside your postgraduate qualification. Postgraduate qualifications may increase long-term earnings, but they do not usually merit higher starting salaries.
- **Is it necessary to get into your chosen occupation?** The usual path into many careers, such as teaching, law, social work and librarianship, involves a professional

postgraduate qualification. However, in recent years, career routes have diversified so you may be able to enter these roles with a range of alternative qualifications. For example, if you have a non-law degree, the normal route to becoming a solicitor is to complete a Graduate Diploma in Law, a Legal Practice Certificate and a training contract, but you can also become a legal executive and transfer. Therefore, if you are considering further study in order to join a particular profession, make sure you research all the routes into your chosen role before choosing the most appropriate path.

- **Will it help you avoid the 'big bad world'?** Whether they admit it or not, this is one of the major reasons why some people consider further study. This is an understandable motive after spending so many years in education but be aware that, after you have completed your postgraduate study, you will still have to face up to life after university, possibly with even more debt.
- **Can you build useful networks?** Networking is a crucial element of career development. Make sure you choose a postgraduate course that gives you wide access to professionals in your chosen field.
- **Will it help you sit out the economic slowdown?** You may consider taking up postgraduate study as a way to avoid the current competitive job market and wait for the economy to turn around. This may be a sensible option but you should be confident that there will be more opportunities in your chosen field when you finish your course. You should also take the opportunity to get work experience and make good contacts.
- **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, or if you have started work and want to move into a new field. You could undertake a wide range of courses, such as a Masters, a conversion course or a PhD. However, you should be aware that the majority of graduate employers do not require a specific degree or further qualifications. So before you take such a major step, make sure that your new qualification will enhance your opportunities. You may be able to make a career move just through your original qualification and your employment experience. Conversion courses can be very useful for graduates with general degrees who wish to take a vocational direction such as law or psychology.

### When should I study?

- **Straight after your degree** - if a course requires up-to-date knowledge and skills there is a clear advantage to signing up immediately after your undergraduate degree. This will also ensure that you don't get out of the habit of studying. Immediate postgraduate study could help you in your career by giving you a unique selling point in your job applications, refocusing your skills or providing you with a professional qualification. On a more personal note, it will probably involve less turmoil at this stage if you just carry on with your studies rather than uprooting yourself mid-career.

- **After a break** - the main reason for taking a break before postgraduate study is that you will gain important skills and experience that will help to maximise the impact of your new qualification. This is because employers greatly value transferable skills such as teamwork and technical skills. Whether you take time out from your studies to work or travel, it will give you a chance to improve your CV and make yourself more attractive to employers. This is especially true in relation to professional qualifications, such as those in social work, which often require a period of employment experience before you can even start the course. The personal advantages to taking a break are that you will be refreshed and you can save up some money to fund your studies.
- **While you are working** - many graduates continue in some sort of training even when they have found work. You could study during the evenings and weekends or your employer may allow you to take study leave. Studying and working simultaneously will enable you to put theory into practice and will help you to develop your career. However, it can be very tiring, especially if you have other commitments, so you will need to be motivated and enthusiastic if you are going to succeed.
- **Mid-career break** - this is an option for graduates who feel they need a further qualification to progress in their chosen career or enter a new field. Either way you should make sure that the qualification you are considering will be beneficial before you hand in your notice at work. The advantage of this option is that you will probably be able to save up the money you need and will have a wide range of skills to bring to the course and your future career. On the other hand, you have to ask yourself if you can afford to live without your salary and if you will have the energy and opportunity to reinvigorate your career once you have finished your study.

### Further information

- [Lifelong Learning](#) - latest news on issues related to further study.
  - [Directgov - Graduate Careers and Postgraduate Study](#)
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## Where should I study?

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. This section helps you research the various courses on offer and choose the right one for you.

### Finding a course

Before choosing a particular course you should research as wide a range of options as possible, not just those at your local university or where you currently study. There are various ways in which 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. [Search courses and research](#) and see the following resources:

- [Universities and departments](#) - detailed profiles of universities and colleges outlining their research profile, facilities and programmes.
- [Find a Masters](#)
- [Find a PhD](#)

## What do I need to think about?

With so many different courses on offer you need to put a great deal of thought into picking the one that works best for you.

Firstly, you should narrow down your search according to whether you fit the course requirements. Some courses may require a 2:1 or higher, or related work experience.

Then narrow down your search using the following criteria:

- **Course content** - does the course cover the specific subjects you require? Even if two courses have similar titles they may be very different in practice. If the course is a professional qualification, make sure it is accredited by the relevant professional body.
- **Teaching and learning** - do the course providers deliver options or specialist pathways that suit your particular interests and needs and provide your preferred teaching style/research methods? Do they have a good ratio of staff to students?
- **Learning environment** - are the facilities and resources of a good standard?
- **Reputation** - is the university and course well regarded?
- **Funding** - do they offer scholarships or bursaries and are grants available from the Research Councils?
- **Career opportunities** - do they have good links with industry? Are their graduates successful in the workplace?
- **Personal issues** - can you see yourself living there?

There are a number of ways to research postgraduate courses:

- Ask tutors at your present/previous institution for guidance.
- Look up courses on forums such as those on [Find a Masters](#) and [Postgraduate Forum](#).
- Look up quality reports from the [The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education \(QAA\)](#).
- See if the courses are accredited by relevant professional bodies.
- Talk to representatives at postgraduate open days and study fairs.
- Visit the institutions and talk to students and academics.
- Visit their careers services and ask where recent graduates have found work. You can also ask if it is possible to speak to some graduates.
- Contact alumni societies and student forums at institutions and find out what things are really like.

## How do I pick a research programme?

If you are looking into a research post you should also consider:

- **The research project itself** - does it suit your interests and career plans?
- **Your supervisor** - will you be able to build a good working relationship with them? In order to see if you will get on with each other, read their published work and discuss the project in detail before you start.
- **The postgrad community** - ensure that the university has a thriving postgrad

community with whom you can share ideas.

- **Access to resources** - make sure you will have access to all the equipment and support you will need, e.g. will you have your own computer/laboratory space?
- **The quality of the research** - see the [Research Assessment Exercise](#) for details on the research rating the department has earned. Scores of 4\* are rated world leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour.
- **The chance to earn some money** - will you be able to earn extra money teaching undergraduates or is this expected from you with no payment?

## Further information

- [Just Courses](#)
  - [Postgrad.com](#)
  - [Postgrad.ie](#) and [postgradireland](#) - postgraduate courses in Ireland.
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## Taught courses

The two main types of taught courses are Masters degrees and postgraduate certificates/diplomas. They cover a wide range of subject areas.

### Masters degrees

- A Masters degree gives you the opportunity to either further your knowledge of a particular subject or study in a completely different area using the skills gained from your undergraduate studies.
- Masters of Arts (MA) courses are normally in arts, social sciences, business or humanities subjects.
- Masters of Science (MSc) are awarded for science and social science courses.
- You will find that MA and MSc courses are offered in the same subject area. This is often because the approach to the subject is slightly different. It is important to check.
- Other taught Masters courses include the Masters of Business Administration (MBA) and the Masters of Education (MEd).
- There are an increasing number of Masters of Research (MRes) courses for science and social science subjects. Although a taught course, 60% of its content has to be individual research project work. It is therefore particularly useful for prospective PhD candidates or those who wish to pursue a research career.
- A full-time Masters usually takes one year to complete.
- Courses can include placements, practical or research projects and supervised laboratory work.
- Assessment includes exams, group or course work and assessed projects.

To find out more about what is involved, see [Masters](#).

## Postgraduate diplomas and certificates

- These courses often provide the professional qualifications needed for a specific career. See [postgraduate diplomas and certificates](#) for more information.
- Certificates take about four months to complete and diplomas take about nine months.
- These courses can provide a stepping stone to a Masters degree. They can also be awarded to those who do not fully complete a Masters. For example, if you complete all the taught units of a Masters but not the dissertation, you could be awarded a diploma.

## Can I study part time?

Hundreds of part-time courses are offered in the UK every year, either on campus or through distance learning/e-learning options. Part-time Masters normally take between two and five years to complete, but you can usually progress at your own pace. Distance learning providers usually email resources to you or make them available over the internet and courses often expect you to attend residential or day workshops.

Part-time Masters courses are offered by the [Open University \(OU\)](#) and a range of other higher education (HE) institutions and private organisations.

Part-time study may be for you if:

- you have other commitments, such as a job and a family;
- you cannot afford to pay for an expensive course in one go;
- you can get by without ongoing access to a university's wider postgraduate community.

## Can I afford to do a Masters?

Masters degrees are expensive and you will also have to support yourself while you are studying, which will cost anything upwards of £7,000 a year (more in London). Only you can decide whether this is affordable based on the funding you can secure.

You should not undertake such a large investment lightly. If you plan on getting deeper into debt you have to ask yourself how you will pay it back once you graduate, especially if you cannot find a job straight away.

## Will it improve my job prospects?

Higher qualifications, such as a Masters, diploma or certificate, can enhance your career prospects in certain situations:

- **Gaining expertise** - you can demonstrate superior knowledge in a highly technical field, such as risk management or maritime law.

- **Converting** - a range of qualifications is offered to help graduates specialise in a different field from their original degree.
- **Demonstrating commitment** - employers may be attracted by the interest you have demonstrated in a subject by studying it in greater detail, but experience will be more highly valued.
- **Developing skills** - you can use the time on your course to research the skills required in your chosen field and develop them to a high level.
- **Making contacts** - use your privileged position as a postgraduate student to build networks which will help you in your career.
- **Updating your qualifications** - if you graduated some time ago your qualifications may have lost some currency. A Masters may help you to catch up with current thinking in your field and reinvigorate your professional offering.
- **Hiding any slip-ups** - a Masters may help you to overcome any gaps or issues on your CV, such as low grades or a lack of work experience. However, you should be aware that major recruiters still tend to focus on your A-level grades and undergraduate degree classification, even if you have a further qualification.
- **Sitting out an economic slowdown** - if you cannot find any work because of the difficult economic situation, it may be worth taking up a Masters qualification. However, make sure that it is the recession that is preventing you from finding work, not something else, and that the economic environment in your chosen field will not actually deteriorate over the next year.

## Further information

- [Which MBA?](#) - news and information on MBA courses.

## Research degrees

The best-known research qualification is the PhD, also known as the DPhil. Other possible courses are MA and MSc degrees by research and the MPhil, which is sometimes taken before embarking on a PhD.

### Doctoral degrees (PhD, DPhil)

These involve contributing new knowledge in a well-designed research project or thesis (40,000 words upwards) that is worthy of publication. There may be some taught units on research methods, but the PhD is awarded mainly on the quality of the final thesis. They take three to four years to complete full time or five to seven years part time. For more information see [Doctorates](#).

Two recent adaptations to the traditional PhD format are:

- **The [New Route PhD](#) or integrated PhD** - combines research with a structured programme of training in research methods and transferable professional skills. Interim awards at diploma, certificate or Masters level and professional qualifications may be offered in some programmes. It takes a minimum of four years full time, or six years part time, to complete.
- **Professional Doctorates** - with a substantial taught core are available in some vocational areas such as engineering (EngD or DEng), business (DBA) and

education (EdD). These integrate professional and academic knowledge for those interested in professional rather than academic careers. Many are accredited by professional bodies and paid for by employers. See [Find a Professional Doctorate](#).

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, hospital laboratories and research institutions.

### **Masters degrees by research (MA, MSc, MPhil)**

- Research-based MAs and MScs involve an extensive project or set of tasks that often lead on to a PhD. They typically take longer than taught Masters to complete, i.e. between one to two years full time or two to four years part time.
- 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. However, this dissertation is shorter than a PhD thesis (typically 30,000 - 35,000 words). There are some taught units on research methods and you are supervised by an experienced academic.
- In most UK institutions, formal registration for a PhD takes place after the initial year of research (when you are officially at MPhil level) and following the successful completion of what is called a 'transfer report'.
- It may be possible to transfer from a PhD back to an MPhil degree. An MPhil, however, does not confer 'Doctor' status and would not enable you to do postdoctoral research.
- It may be possible to gain a Masters degree whilst working with the [Knowledge Transfer Partnerships \(KTP\)](#) scheme. This enables recently qualified graduates (known as KTP Associates) 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. Projects last from ten weeks to three years.

### **Can I study part time?**

It is possible to study part time but you will usually be expected to study the taught content of the qualification on campus according to the usual timetable.

### **Can I afford to do a research degree?**

Research degrees are expensive but they often come with funding from Research Councils and private organisations. Universities also offer scholarships called studentships and paid teaching opportunities. Contact the course provider before you sign up to see what funding may be available to cover your fees and living expenses.

### **Will it improve my job prospects?**

A PhD makes you an authority in a very narrow field. It is a significant achievement but such expertise will only be valued by a few recruiters within academia, industry and in the public sector, and competition can be fierce:

- To get into research within academia you usually have to undertake a series of postdoctoral positions lasting for one to two years before you can hope to secure a permanent post and these can be difficult to come by. Maximise your chances and find out what it takes to become a successful academic at [An Academic Career](#).
- To get into industry your PhD will have to be relevant to technical roles that require high levels of expertise, e.g. within fields such as scientific research for pharmaceutical companies or commissioning and editing for specialist academic journals.
- To get into other support functions within higher education (HE), such as staff training, career development and student recruitment, you will need to demonstrate to employers how your experience gives you a unique selling point.

You can also use your PhD to get into roles that do not require such a level of expertise. To do this, you need to think of your PhD in terms of your first graduate job and use it to demonstrate your skills and commitment to employers.

Major graduate employers do not generally look more favourably on candidates with a PhD than those with undergraduate qualifications, but they will be impressed by the transferable skills you have gained.

### Further information

- [Vitae](#) - career development for Doctoral researchers.
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## Conversion courses

Conversion courses are typically one-year taught courses that allow you to convert to a new subject area.

### Why take a conversion course?

- **Enhance your employment prospects** - conversion courses allow you to refocus the skills you have gained during your degree in a new professional field, such as law, teaching or psychology. Sometimes a conversion course can also build on your first degree by adding vocational skills, such as a biology student choosing an IT conversion course to facilitate entry to bioinformatics.
- **Awarded at different levels** - conversion courses are awarded at certificate, diploma and Masters level and you can often progress from one to another.
- **Fast-track route** - for those who want to enhance their employability in a short space of time, these courses concentrate a large amount of information into a short time span.

- **Sponsorship possibilities** - as these courses are often vocational and are accredited by professional bodies, they are highly valued by employers who may offer sponsorship opportunities.

## Careers areas you can enter

- **Law** - the Graduate Diploma in Law (GDL) is a popular course for graduates who did not study an accredited law degree at undergraduate level and now wish to train to become a solicitor or a barrister. Successful completion of this course allows you to apply for the Legal Practice Course (LPC) to become a [solicitor](#), or the Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC) to be a [barrister](#).
- **Psychology** - the Graduate Diploma in Psychology (GDP) allows graduates who have not studied a psychology degree that has been accredited by the [British Psychological Society \(BPS\)](#) a pathway to a professional psychology course. If you have not studied any psychology in your first degree, you may need to first attend a bridging programme before starting the GDP.
- **Medicine** - graduate entry medicine courses are four-year fast-track courses for graduates who have not studied medicine as their first degree. Some are open to graduates of any discipline, while others require specific degrees and/or qualifications in chemistry or biology. Relevant work experience is also required for these highly competitive courses.
- **Other medical** - conversion courses are also available in other areas of [healthcare](#), including nursing, occupational health, speech and language therapy, dentistry, physiotherapy and radiography.
- **Social work** - two-year Masters courses in social work that are approved by the [General Social Care Council \(GSCC\)](#) provide an alternative route for those who have not completed an undergraduate social work degree. You will usually need at least six months' relevant paid or voluntary work experience. This leads to a professional qualification as a [social worker](#).
- **Teaching** - the Postgraduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a popular conversion course for graduates who wish to teach. As the course focuses on teaching skills, not the subjects that are taught, you often need to have prior knowledge from your undergraduate degree of the subject you wish to teach. If not, you may be able to do a subject knowledge enhancement course.
- **IT/Business** - these courses give graduates the competitive edge when applying for business careers, especially in highly technical fields such as risk management. An MSc in management can be an alternative for those who do not have the required work experience needed to apply for an MBA. An MSc in information technology can add skills to your existing degree to enhance employability.

For further details of job roles available in these areas, see [types of jobs](#).

## Future prospects

All conversion courses are vocational in nature to varying extents and may provide a fast-track route to enhanced employment prospects, particularly if they are accredited by a professional body. However, you should not expect to just walk into a job. Even with these qualifications, the market is still usually competitive and you will need to present a well-rounded package which includes good grades, contacts and employment experience. Before signing up for a course you should assess the future employment prospects in your chosen field by speaking to relevant employers and a careers adviser.

## Further information

- [Clearing House for Postgrad Courses in Clinical Psychology](#)
  - [Law Central Admissions Board \(LCAB\)](#)
  - [Graduate Teacher Training Registry \(GTTR\)](#)
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## Applying for postgrad study

The most popular postgraduate study options can be oversubscribed and you will only be accepted if your application stands out from the crowd. Choose your path well in advance and engage in activities which demonstrate that you have the skills and commitment required. 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 college or university or through the [UKPASS](#) clearing house. You can [apply online](#) and link to a number of institutions. In Northern Ireland, applications are made through the [Postgraduate Applications Centre \(PAC\)](#). For postgraduate courses in teaching, law, music performance and social work, applications are made to specific clearing houses.

### Timetable for applications

Most postgraduate courses have no official closing date, but you should still apply as soon as you are ready. Exceptions include medicine, law and teacher training.

### **24-18 months in advance - Research your options and plan a timetable of action**

- Consider your options and research how you can give yourself a good chance of success when it comes to filling out your application forms. For example, you could identify appropriate voluntary and work experience opportunities.
- Try to source work experience. This is particularly important if you are interested in very popular courses, such as law, journalism and professions related to medicine.

- If you are interested in research, consider potential supervisors and make initial enquiries. They may also be able to help with funding opportunities.

### **18-12 months in advance - Continue research and firm up your plans**

- Some courses may have early closing dates for applications so check in plenty of time.
- Speak to members of staff at your own institution who are experts in your chosen field. They may be able to suggest related areas of study and institutions worth investigation.
- Check the dates of [postgraduate fairs](#) and university open days.
- If you have a specific research interest, consider writing your own research proposal in conjunction with your potential supervisor for submission to funding bodies.
- Consider how you will fund your course.

### **12-6 months in advance - Apply for places and funding**

- This is the time when most people start to plan and take action with regard to postgraduate study in the UK.
- If you have not already done so, make initial enquiries about courses. Prospectuses are often available online. Make contact with course tutors and check course details, specific entry requirements and the possibility of nomination by the department for a funding award (where relevant).
- Attend department open days or arrange a visit to the department.
- Make sure you get good academic references to support your application as they are critical to the selection and award-seeking processes. Choose your referees with care and discuss your plans with them. Check that they will be available to respond quickly to a request for a reference.
- Write personal statements. Look at [postgraduate studentships](#) for examples used by real students to enter postgraduate study.
- Make applications as soon as you are clear about the courses or research programmes you prefer, possibly before Christmas or soon after New Year.
- Look into any available funding and make applications.

### **Last 6 months - Continue with applications and attend interviews**

- It is at this time that course providers start to call in candidates for interviews and

it is important to be prepared.

- By now, you will probably know if you have been successful in obtaining offers and whether funding is attached. The offers are usually conditional depending on your final degree results, so give priority to your academic work.
- By the end of the academic year departments are much clearer about the level of funding available and, subject to a candidate's satisfactory degree performance, can confirm or clarify their offers.
- If you have made a late decision to consider postgraduate study, keep looking for courses and research posts because it is still possible to pick up late offers, particularly if you have your degree results rather than a predicted grade.

## Personal statement

Most applications require a personal statement and you are usually asked to name your referees or send a reference. In your statement, you will be expected to prove your commitment and skills in relation to the course and your chosen career.

- **Proving your commitment** - your application should show that you have a genuine interest and enthusiasm for the subject and have carefully planned how you will use the qualification to further your career. Therefore, you should demonstrate an in-depth knowledge of each particular 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. This means that, 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 thesis.

Provide recent and relevant examples of the skills and commitment required by the course provider/s you are approaching, and don't just focus on how much you like the subject.

You should also include the following elements:

- an introduction to what you have touched on in your statement and a brief summary;
- short paragraphs;
- short dynamic sentences and action words.

At all costs avoid the following:

- spelling mistakes;
- grammar mistakes;
- untailored applications.

## Example interview questions

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. Some typical questions are shown below:

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

Show your enthusiasm and passion for the subject. Make reference to relevant modules and projects, or a dissertation from your undergraduate study, which have persuaded you to develop your interest further. If you have a career aim, show how the course will help you to achieve this. Explain the unique contribution your research will make to the university, as well as how it will fit with existing research (if appropriate).

### 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. You should also identify the specific competencies each course provider is seeking. You could find out this information on their website, by talking to them or looking through postgraduate forums, such as those provided by [Find a Masters](#) and [Postgraduate Forum](#).

Avoid just listing your skills. Outline the following:

- **Where** you gained the competency they require, for example, from experience at work or university.
- **How** you perform it to a high level, for example, you may demonstrate good teamwork skills by taking other people's ideas into consideration, supporting colleagues and being responsible for your individual task.
- **How** your expertise will benefit the course, for example, your analytical proficiency may help your team to carry out in-depth research.

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

Interviewers want to ensure that you are committed to their course so 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 at this stage, some sense of direction will signal that you are a serious candidate.

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

Ensure you have prepared well for this question. 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 yourself if you are not successful in grant applications. Perhaps you will work and study part time or use a career development loan. See [Directgov - Professional and Career Development Loans](#) for further information.

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

This question is designed to ascertain whether you have a 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 fired 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, tenacity and self-discipline.

### **Why should we accept you?**

This is a gift question. It 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.

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## **Fees and funding**

Postgraduate study is expensive. Over recent years, fees for popular courses and living costs have risen substantially. This section outlines the typical costs you will incur by going back to university and where you might find some funding.

### **Tuition fees**

- For UK and EU students, fees typically start at about £3,000 and rise to over £10,000 for some courses, such as a Bar Professional Training Course (BPTC). MBA courses can cost about £18,000.
- Research-based courses tend to cost less than taught courses. Those involving laboratory work are usually more expensive.
- Fees for international students may be double the fees for home students.
- Specific details of fees can be found on the postgraduate pages of university websites or in postgraduate prospectuses.

## 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.
- You can find a budget planner on the [Universities and Colleges Admissions Service \(UCAS\)](#) website.

## Sources of funding

Grants for postgraduate study do exist, and can cover both fees and living expenses, but they are certainly not automatic. Students tend to fund their study through personal means such as family loans and savings, and external sources including bank loans, scholarships, grants and research studentships.

Have a look at [funding my further study](#) for detailed information about the availability of funding for postgraduate study and potential sources of income.

## Further information

- [Research Councils UK](#)
- [Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council \(EPSRC\)](#) - industry-funded studentships.
- [Association of Medical Research Charities \(AMRC\)](#)
- [Royal Astronomical Society](#) - list of postgraduate research opportunities in astronomy and geophysics and a competition for the best PhD theses.
- [Royal Geographical Society](#)

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