

POSTGRADUATE STUDY

DELVE DEEPER INTO YOUR SUBJECT OR CHANGE CAREER DIRECTION

Enjoyed your dissertation or research project? Progressing to Masters or PhD study is a chance to keep doing what you love. Some career paths also require specialist skills, experience, and qualifications. A higher degree can enable you to fulfil those career dreams to become a lawyer, teacher, or physiotherapist, for example. This leaflet gives an overview of some of the key issues to consider before you apply, including funding, mode of study and what makes a great application.

CLARIFY YOUR CAREER GOALS

Use Prospects Job Profiles for further research. Identify exactly what it takes to progress in your preferred career:

prospects.ac.uk/job-profiles

Book a 1:1 [careers guidance appointment](#) via CareerHub to get support in planning your career and further study. Clarify your goals before pursuing a Masters.

It might be better to spend some time in the workplace, research your options, or take a [gap year](#).

EXPLORE OPTIONS

Research a range of options and go to Open Days (in-person or remotely) before applying. Modes of study include: full time, part time, blended learning, block mode learning or distance learning. Consider each institution or learning provider carefully, and choose the course, mode, and location that's right for you, and your circumstances.

LINKS TO RESEARCH

Information on PG qualifications and funding

prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study

Global directory of PG qualifications

findamasters.com

Postgraduate webinar series

essex.ac.uk/postgraduate/masters/pg-webinar-series

Explore MBA study options

mba.com/global

Choosing between similar courses

ucas.com/postgraduate/choosing-course/choosing-between-similar-courses

Check university rates for research

ref.ac.uk

LINKS FOR FUNDING

Postgraduate funding overview

prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/funding-postgraduate-study

Essex Alumni discounts for PG study essex.ac.uk/fees-and-funding/masters/loyalty

PG funding and fees in different countries

findamasters.com/funding

Information on loan, studentships, bursaries and grants available to UK students

gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study

Fund PG research via scholarships

postgraduateresearch.com/funding

Postgraduate studentships for MSc and PhD

postgraduatestudentships.co.uk

HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR A POSTGRADUATE APPLICATION

Showcase your suitability and passion for your subject. Your statement should be as unique as you are - avoid being generic by making the content personal to you and particular to your chosen course and university.

The job of your personal statement is to convince postgraduate admissions tutors that you are capable and motivated. Your personal statement needs to show why you want to go to your chosen university.

Clear connections between your most recent study and experience with your chosen postgraduate subject are essential and you must provide a commentary on reasons for your choice. You should demonstrate how postgraduate study will build on your current level of learning and fit into your future plans.

Consider the structure of your personal statement. You need an introduction, the main body, and an end. Your opening paragraph needs to lay out your plan and will be your framework for the rest of your statement. Think about the flow of your statement and how you can logically lead the reader through to a positive conclusion.

The main body must describe your interest, relevant experience, and knowledge. Be specific. Keep it factual. Look carefully at the university modules, course or research area and the university's specialisms so you can tailor the statement.

Personal statements for courses linked to professional training e.g., teaching or health professions must provide evidence of commitment to that career path.

POINTS TO CONSIDER:

1. Why do you want to do further study?

Convey your enthusiasm and motivation for study/research. Don't try to write what you think they want to hear, write your real reasons. Write about any projects, dissertations or extended essays that are relevant or demonstrate relevant skills. Mention any prizes you have won, travel or study abroad and relevant employment. Describe anything that shows creativity, dependability, or independence.

2. Why this subject?

Be clear about your subject choice. 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 field - through classes, seminars, work, or conversations with academic staff?

3. How is your first degree relevant to this study?

Highlight any assignments or projects which are relevant or where you've done well. Include relevant skills, e.g. computing, knowledge of data analysis software, or relevant scientific techniques etc. Explain any circumstances that may have affected your academic results, that you think should be considered.

4. Why this university?

Give reasons why you have selected them as your university of choice and prove that you are not just spreading the net wide. Explain what it is that you feel this university has to offer, why that appeals to you, and how you will be able to contribute to it.

5. Are there specific academic staff you want to do research or study with?

You may want to research who you will be working with so that you can explain why you would like to work with them and what you will learn from them. Do not write vague statements such as 'Prof. Y is a leader in her field' but comment on what she has written and why it has interested you.

6. How are you going to step up to the advanced level of postgraduate study?

Selectors want to be convinced that you are going to cope well with this level of study. Demonstrate that you've done your homework about the course/research and that you've seriously considered your commitment and scholarly abilities to undertake postgraduate study or research.

7. What personal skills can you offer?

If you have worked or volunteered during vacations, what skills have you learned? These might include team working, communication or working under pressure. Have you had to overcome any obstacles or hardships in your life? This may show evidence of determination/resilience.

8. What are your career aims?

You may not have a well-defined focus on what you want to do after, but you should have some ideas. A clear direction will strengthen your commitment to do well in your studies and selectors will know this. Your desire to become a lawyer or lecturer, for example, should be a logical result of specific experience in your statement.

9. How will this postgraduate research expand on your previous research interests?

If you have enjoyed an aspect of the research you completed during your undergraduate degree, you may want to consider expanding on this research at a postgraduate level. You may want to answer a research question you raised during your undergraduate course or through work experience.

Personal statement examples

prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/personal-statements-for-postgraduate-applications

FURTHER SUPPORT

Book a **Postgraduate Study Application Support appointment** on CareerHub for help with your application.

For more information, advice and support with CVs, email careersinfo@essex.ac.uk or visit careerhub.essex.ac.uk to book an event or 1-1 appointment.