

POSTGRADUATE STUDY

DELVE DEEPER INTO YOUR SUBJECT OR PROGRESS IN YOUR CAREER

Once you have completed your undergraduate degree you may be considering continuing your higher education journey by studying for a master's or PhD. Whether you are about to graduate or are a past graduate looking to come back to university, there are lots of options available to you. If you are unsure about whether to pursue – or how to explore – postgraduate study hopefully this information sheet can help shed some light on your questions.

'A master's degree can also aid a career change, help you to gain charterhip, and provide useful industry contacts and connections'.

- Jemma Smith, prospect.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/should-i-do-a-masters

WILL POSTGRADUATE STUDY HELP YOU TO REACH YOUR CAREER GOALS?

When exploring further study, it is useful to have a career goal in mind to help refine your course options. You can use Prospects' Job Profiles for further research, and to help you identify exactly what it takes to progress in your preferred career.

prospect.ac.uk/job-profiles

It is helpful to remember that going straight into further study isn't your only option. It might be a better fit for you to spend some time in the workplace, research your options, or take a gap year.

EXPLORE YOUR OPTIONS

With so many course options available, Open Days are a great source of information and are a chance to ask questions. There are lots of modes of study: full-time, part-time, blended learning, block-mode learning, or distance learning – meaning study can work with your schedule and needs.

RESOURCES

Information on PG qualifications and funding

prospect.ac.uk/postgraduate-study

Global directory of PG qualifications

findamasters.com

Choosing between similar courses

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

Explore MBA study options

mba.com/global

Check university rates for research

ref.ac.uk

Conversion courses

prospect.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/conversion-courses

Postgraduate online learning explained

prospect.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/online-learning

FUNDING FURTHER STUDY

There are a variety of funding options to consider: including loans, studentships, bursaries, and grants – you might also get help from your employer.

- Postgraduate funding overview
prospect.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
postgraduatesearch.com/funding
- Postgraduate studentships for MSc and PhD
postgraduatestudentships.co.uk

HOW TO WRITE A PERSONAL STATEMENT FOR A POSTGRADUATE APPLICATION

Your personal statement is an opportunity to showcase your suitability for a course and passion for your subject – your statement should be as unique as you are. Universities will read hundreds of personal statements every day, so it is important to use your words to stand out.

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 a specific university to pursue a specific subject.

Clear connections between your most recent study – as well as examples of your experience and how these connect with your chosen postgraduate course – are essential, and you must provide cogent commentary on the reasoning undergirding your choices. You should demonstrate how postgraduate study will build on your current level of learning, and how it will fit into your future plans.

Consider the structure of your personal statement. You need an introduction, main body, and an end. Your opening paragraph needs to lay out your plan and will be the 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 clear conclusion, leaving them with a positive impression.

The main body must describe your interest(s), relevant experience, and knowledge. Be specific. Keep it factual. Look carefully at the university's specialisms – modules, courses, research centres, and the research interests of relevant academics in the department to which you are applying. This will allow you to tailor your statement to these factors.

Keep in mind that personal statements for courses linked to professional training – e.g. teaching or health professions – must provide evidence of commitment to that career path, such as work experience or placements.

KEY POINTS TO CONSIDER

- 1. Why do you want to do further study?**
Convey your enthusiasm and motivation for study/research. Write about any relevant projects, dissertations, and experiences that demonstrate your skills. And describe anything that shows your creativity, dependability, or independence as a student.
- 2. Why this subject?**
Be clear about your subject choice. Is the course noted for a particular emphasis, specialty, or orientation? When did you become interested in this field, and what have you learned about it? Have you learned about this field through classes, seminars, work, or conversations with peers and professionals?

- 3. How is your first degree relevant to this study?**
Highlight any relevant assignments or projects in which you excelled. Include relevant skills: e.g. computing, proficiency with software, scientific techniques, etc. Elaborate on your main research project/dissertation if this is research you plan to continue.
- 4. Why this university?**
Give reasons why you have selected a particular institution. 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 the university in turn. Consider their research specialisms, facilities, or anything else they offer that have appealed to you.
- 5. Are there specific academic staff with whom you are interested in researching and studying?**
Research academic staff in the department and explain why you would like to work with them, or what you want to learn from them. Do not write vague statements like 'Prof. Y is a leader in their field'. Be specific about what they have written and why it has interested you. Reflect on the relationship between their research and yours.
- 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 at this level of study. Demonstrate that you have thoroughly researched the field around your interests, and that you have seriously considered your commitment – and scholarly ability – in terms of undertaking postgraduate study or research.
- 7. What personal skills do you have?**
If you have been able to work or volunteer, what skills have you learned? These might include transferable skills such as teamwork, communication, or working under pressure. Have you had to overcome any obstacles or hardships in your life? This may show evidence of determination and resilience.
- 8. What are your career aims?**
You may not have a well-defined notion of exactly what you want to do, but you should have some ideas. A clear direction will strengthen your commitment to do well in your studies, and selectors will want to see this. Your desire to become a lawyer or lecturer, for example, should be a logical result of experiences you have mentioned in your statement.

Examples of personal statements

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

FURTHER SUPPORT

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