

Finding the Right Course – Postgraduate Study

Taught or Research?

There are a variety of options for studying at postgraduate level including full-time, part-time, distance learning and work-based learning. Some of the different postgraduate degree qualifications available are listed below:

Graduate Certificate
Graduate Diploma
PgCert - Postgraduate Certificate
PgDip - Postgraduate Diploma
PGCE - Postgraduate Certificate in Education
PGDE - Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Republic of Ireland)
Taught Master's - MSc, MA
Taught/Research Master's - MRes
Research Degrees - MPhil, DPhil, PhD, Professional Doctorates

These courses are studied after completion of an undergraduate degree and are designed for students who wish to specialise in a subject.

PGCE/PGDE - Postgraduate Certificate (or Diploma in the Republic of Ireland) in Education are training courses for prospective teachers. These courses are typically 1-2 years in duration, but vary depending on the institution you wish to study at, and whether you study full-time or part-time.

Taught Master's - Taught Master's (generally MSc and MA) are usually delivered by taught units over 1 or 2 years. Most taught Master's offer some flexibility in the units that you study; some units are compulsory, and some units you can choose as options. You are also usually required to carry out a project/dissertation at the final stage of the Master's degree.

Mixed Taught/Research Degrees - Master's degrees by research offer a mixture of taught units and a major research project so that you can study a particular topic, while also gaining more experience of independent research than you would with a taught master's programme. These degrees are usually designed to prepare students for studying at PhD level.

Research Degrees - Research degrees have a different structure to taught Master's and can take up to six years to complete, if studying part-time. You will carry out a piece of independent research, under supervision, and write this as a thesis, for which you will be examined by viva voce examination.

Research degrees offer the flexibility to study a chosen research topic and gain experience in experimental design, independent working and project management.

Choosing the right course

When choosing a postgraduate course, you should consider:

- What subject you want to study and its relevance to your future career
- How much of the course is taught and how much is research/project-based
- What units/subject areas are included in the course, and which units are optional/compulsory
- Where will the qualification lead you?
- How good is the university for postgraduate study and what facilities will be available to you?

- How much will it cost? What are the tuition fees?
- Do you want to study full-time, part-time or by distance learning? Do you need to fit the course around your job?

There is plenty of advice out there for postgraduate students and the following websites are a good place to start:

The **Prospects** website gives details of all taught and research degrees available for study in the UK. You can search for courses by subject area, region and mode of study (full-time or part-time etc.). Prospects also offer careers advice, details of funding available for postgraduate study, and a graduate job search facility.

Find A PhD lists all research degrees that are currently being advertised in the UK and abroad, including details of funded opportunities and research opportunities where you will need to pay your own fees.

It is worth bearing in mind that not all PhD opportunities are advertised on this website, so it is worth approaching individual institutions if there is a particular topic that you are interested in researching, or a particular university that you would like to study at.

PhDs are also listed on the Prospects website so it is worth spending time looking around on different websites to make sure you find all available courses.

Find A Master's lists all taught postgraduate Master's courses available for study in the UK and abroad. They offer advice on how to choose the right course, and there is also a postgraduate forum that you can join so that you can network with other postgraduates.

The Graduate Teacher Training Registry (**GTTR**) manages all applications for PGCE courses in England and Wales. The GTTR website includes a course database where you can search for the right course for you and gives full details on how to apply, entry requirements and application deadlines.

Applications for postgraduate courses, including teacher training, in the Republic of Ireland should be submitted via the Postgraduate Applications Centre Ltd (**PAC**). PAC lists all postgraduate courses available for study in Ireland, and gives details on how to apply for the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (delivered by the National University of Ireland).

How do I choose the right University for me?

Do some research - Spend some time researching the courses that are being delivered. New courses are introduced all throughout the year, and university websites will provide you with the most up to date information.

Visit universities - The best way to find out if a particular university is the best place for you to study is to visit the university yourself, meet the staff, speak to other students who are staying there and look at the facilities that are available. Open days and preview days are run all throughout the year and you can find details of these on the individual university websites.

Statistics - When researching which university to study at, it is important to remember that statistics published about universities often relate to a particular department or subject area, and may not give the answers you are looking for.

You can find the results of the latest **National Student Survey** on the **Unistats** website. The **Unistats** website is run by the Higher Education Funding Council and brings together official information about universities in the UK and publishes the results of the annual National Student Survey.

Funding your postgraduate studies

Postgraduate tuition fees vary, and can be expensive, so it is best to start planning how you will fund your postgraduate course before you start applying. The annual tuition fee may determine whether you want to study a course full-time or part-time.

There is funding available for postgraduate study, but there can be a lot of competition for this funding depending on the course that you choose to study.

Check individual university websites for details on their postgraduate tuition fees - you may find that some universities offer bursaries to some students, or alumni discount to students who have previously studied a degree with them, so it is worth checking.

You can access more information and advice on funding your postgraduate study by visiting the following websites:

www.direct.gov.uk

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/department-for-education>

<https://www.postgrad.ie/course-search/>

<https://www.postgraduatestudentships.co.uk/>

www.prospects.ac.uk

www.saas.gov.uk

www.nerc.ac.uk