

Information for PhD & Research Students and Those Considering Postgraduate Study

Including Funding Information



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INFORMATION FOR THOSE CONSIDERING POST GRADUATE STUDY

Some different types of postgraduate study

Post-graduate diploma/certificate – around 9 months if full-time

- Often provide a professional qualification needed for a particular career
e.g. journalism
- May allow you to carry on to full Masters course

Master of Science/Master of Arts (MSc/MA's) – One year if full time

Can be either:

- Taught
- By research (some taught elements, some research)
- Research – no formal taught component

Master of Research (MRes) – One year if full time

- At least 60% of content must be individual project work

Master of Philosophy (MPhil) – Two years if full-time

- Entirely project-based/research based

Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) – Three years if full-time

- Entirely research based
- Opportunity to develop your own original, cutting edge, ideas

It is unusual to get straight onto a PhD without first having completed one of the other qualifications listed above.

Many post-grad courses are now also offered part-time and some by distance learning. Nearly 60% of all taught Postgraduate students now study part-time, often combining this with part-time work to help fund their studies. Go online at www.direct.gov.uk/studentfinance to look at the special rules governing part-time study.

For most research degrees a 2i or first is essential.

Most MSc's/MA's are either an extension of a student's current area of study or a conversion course.

The following specialist handouts are available to take away in MMU Careers Library: "Applying for a PGCE"; "Information for MBA's". There are also specific handouts for those looking at postgraduate study connected to law.

How are study opportunities advertised?

Look on individual universities' websites/prospectuses. Funded opportunities are often also advertised in the local/national press. You must apply direct to the university (not via UCAS). Look out for Postgraduate study fairs and events.

The Times Higher Education Supplement advertises opportunities – www.thes.co.uk. You could also look on www.jobs.ac.uk, www.phdjobs.com, www.FindAPhD.com, and www.FindAMasters.com. You could also find potential courses via www.postgraduatestudentships.co.uk or www.doctorjob.com/courses.

You can also search for courses using www.prospects.ac.uk/pg and www.postgrad.hobsons.com. The Prospects Postgraduate Directory is a three volume official guide to postgraduate study in the UK. This directory is available for reference in MMU Careers Library.

Other Useful Postgraduate Sites

To help you to decide if postgraduate study is for you use www.prospects.ac.uk/links/pgstudy.

To find out information about the quality of taught courses look on www.qaa.ac.uk and www.hero.ac.uk/rae.

www.gradschools.ac.uk – gives information about the Research Council's Graduate Schools Programme (RCGSP) – a series of courses run exclusively for PhD students. Also gives excellent advice about managing your research and runs "careers in focus" events.

Funding Postgraduate Study

Finding funding for postgrad study is often more difficult than getting a place on a course. The only mandatory funding is for teaching, social work and nursing.

Most local education authorities now only provide post-grad funding for PGCE (teaching) students.

The likelihood is that you will have to support yourself or put together a funding package that draws from savings, earnings from part-time or full-time work, small grants and bursaries and loans.

If you are interested in a particular course, contact the department and ask about possible sources of funding. How have past students financed the course?

Make sure you investigate every possible funding source and that you are aware of dates, deadlines and eligibility criteria.

Look at www.mmu.ac.uk/studentfinance/student/postgrad.php for more information.

1. Funding Councils

There are 7 different funding councils. They provide the main source of funding for PhD, MPhil and taught Masters courses in the UK. Awards are available to cover university fees and a maintenance grant. Applications should usually be made through the university department offering the course or research place as these awards are normally linked to particular courses/areas of research – this does vary, however, and each funding council lists on its website details of funded courses/research and the method of application. The Arts and Humanities Research Council accepts direct applications from students for financial support.

Application deadlines for Research Council awards are usually late April/early May. Competition for Research Council awards is intense.

The most common types of funding provided by Research Councils are:

- Advanced Course Studentships – for taught Masters courses usually lasting one year. These awards are generally allocated through a quota system. Research Councils give quotas of studentships to departments for approved programmes. Individual departments select candidates they feel are most deserving.
- Research Masters (MRes) training awards and standard research studentships – for PhD or MPhil students on programmes of up to 3 years full time or 5 years part time.

Funding for each of the above is currently set at around £12,000 per year.

Funding Council details:

Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

www.ahrc.ac.uk

Covers the following course areas: English and American Studies, Media/Communication Studies, other Language, Literature, Linguistics, Visual and Performing Arts, History of Art/Architecture, History, Philosophy, Theology, Archaeology, Classics, Law, Art and Design, Practice-based Drama, Interpreting and Translating, Film and Television Studies, Archive Administration, Librarianship and Information Science, Creative Writing, Musical Performance.

Biotechnology & Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC)

www.bbsrc.ac.uk

Covers the following course areas: Bimolecular Sciences, Biochemistry and Cell Biology, Genes and Developmental Biology, Animal Sciences, Plant and Microbial Sciences, Engineering and Biological Systems, Agri-Food.

Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)

www.esrc.ac.uk

Covers the following course areas: Economic and Social History, Economics, Education, Human Geography, Interdisciplinary Studies in Science, Technology and Innovation, Linguistics, Management and Business Studies, Planning, Environmental and Housing Studies, Political Science, International Relations, Psychology, Social Anthropology, Social Policy, Social Work and Health Studies, Social Statistics, Research Methods and Computing, Socio-Legal Studies, Sociology.

Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC)

www.epsrc.ac.uk

Covers the following course areas: Chemistry, Engineering, IT and Computer Sciences, Materials, Maths, Physics, Innovative Manufacturing, Life Sciences.

Natural Environment Research Council (NERC)

www.nerc.ac.uk

Covers the following course areas: Earth Observation, Earth Sciences, Freshwater Sciences, Marine and Atmospheric Sciences, Terrestrial Sciences.

Medical Research Council (MRC)

www.mrc.ac.uk

Biomedical subject areas.

Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC)

www.pparc.ac.uk

Covers: Particle Physics, Astronomy and Astrophysics, Solar System Science.

2. European Social Fund Awards

The European Social Fund supports a number of postgraduate vocational courses in the UK. Departments receiving this funding pass on a small training allowance to their students. This is by no means a comprehensive form of funding and it is subject to change year on year. It is always worth asking the department to which you are applying whether the course is likely to attract ESF funding.

3. University Studentships/Bursaries

Each year most universities offer their own studentships. These opportunities are often few in number though. They would be advertised in the national press and on institutions' websites. Universities may also be channels of funding from industry to support specific pieces of research – often in the fields of science or technology.

4. Graduate Teaching and Research Assistantships

Postgraduate teaching and research assistants can receive payment or the waiver of their course fees (or both) in return for teaching, research and other academic duties. Assistantships are usually offered to students doing research rather than those on taught courses. Contact academic departments, check universities' online information and in the press for details, also see "How are opportunities advertised?" above.

5. University Loyalty Discount Scheme

This is a scheme which most universities run, offering a fee discount to graduates of their own university choosing to stay on to undertake a postgraduate course. For example at MMU, UK students receive up to £500 discount and overseas students up to £1,000.

6. Charitable Trusts

Trusts are sometimes able to offer support to specific students although this is likely to be minimal and will only be offered when other avenues have been exhausted. Applications often need to be made well in advance. Most foundations have specific eligibility criteria such as residency, age or nationality.

Every scholarship is different so you must approach each application and/or interview differently. The more you know about an organisation, the better your chance of success

Available on the MMU Careers Service computers in the Careers Library is the **Funderfinder program** which will search the databases of charitable organizations for you to identify potential sources of funding.

The following publications are also available in the Careers Service Library:

A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need

Directory of Grant Making Trusts

The Grants Register

There are bodies which make hundreds of awards in a year and some that make just one. The majority of the awards made by the smaller bodies amount to a few hundred pounds a year and are provided to cover expenses such as travel and fieldwork. Sometimes awards are made solely for the relief of financial hardship.

7. Access Funds

These funds are administered by universities to provide awards to students in financial hardship. Postgrad students who are eligible for a Career Development Loan must have taken one out before they can apply to the Access fund. Students must demonstrate that they can meet the cost of tuition fees (via a loan) and have made reasonable provision to support themselves for the duration of the course. You may only apply to the fund if you are a home student. If you are a part-time student you have to be studying for at least 50% of the equivalent full-

time course. For more information about MMU Access to Learning Fund look at www.mmu.ac.uk/studentfinance.

8. Career Development Loans

If you are unable to secure any other funding, you could consider a career development loan. These are overseen by Dept for Education and Skills, in conjunction with a number of banks, for study which is vocational in nature and will assist you to obtain work – many post grads are not eligible for them. Offered by 3 national banks: Barclays, The Royal Bank of Scotland and the Co-op. The Government pays the interest bill for the duration of the course, but you must begin to pay it back one month after course completion. Mode of attendance can be full time, part-time, open or distance learning. Loans of between £300 - £8,000 normally cover up to 80% of course fee plus other allowable expenses such as books, materials and if course full-time, living expenses, including travel, child care and disability costs.

The course must not attract a mandatory LEA award and may be for up to 2 years. Can support parts of longer courses.

CDL information line – 0800 585505 or visit

www.direct.gov.uk/en/EducationAndLearning/AdultLearning/CareerDevelopmentLoans

9. Part-time work

If your applications for funding are unsuccessful and you do not want to take out a loan, it is worth considering part-time work whilst you are studying. Many universities make provision for students to pay their fees in installments and also offer courses which run part-time and by distance learning, allowing students to fit paid work in around their studies. See the MMU handout “Finding Part Time Jobs” available in the Careers Library.

10. Disability-related support

If you are a UK student on a postgraduate course you may be eligible for Disabled Students' Allowance. Part-time students must be studying for at least 50% of the full-time equivalent course. The course must last for a minimum of one year full time. There is one allowance for all costs. The allowance is assessed by your local authority.

Look at www.dfes.gov.uk/studentssupport for further info or use the Skill website (National Bureau for Students with Disabilities) – www.skill.org.uk.

11. Funding for non-UK Students

EU students – may be eligible to apply to the Funding Councils, but generally the awards will only cover tuition fees.

Non-EU Overseas Students -The British Council offers an award scheme to key professionals in fields which the Council considers important to the relevant country's development. 900 awards made annually see www.britishcouncil.org

and British Chevening Scholarships -www.chevening.com. The Overseas Research Students Award Scheme grants awards on a competitive basis to international postgraduate research students of outstanding merit. See www.orsas.ac.uk for further information and how to apply.

Job search after Postgraduate Study

www.phdjobs.com advertises employment opportunities for which a postgraduate qualification may be a requirement.

www.jobs.ac.uk and www.thes.co.uk carry vacancies for academic and research careers in UK universities.

www.findapostdoc.com advertises academic jobs for post-doctoral researchers worldwide.

<http://www.chronicle.com> (the US equivalent of the Times Higher Education supplement) is a useful site to help you to search for academic career opportunities in the USA

www.mbajobs.net advertises vacancies for those with an MBA and allows you to register your details.

The University Careers Service also holds useful information for postgraduates and researchers; it may also be possible to discuss your career plans and applications with a Careers adviser.

0161 247 3483

www.mmu.ac.uk/careers