Postgraduate study options

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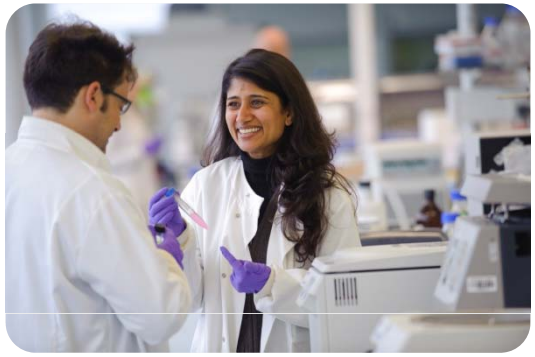
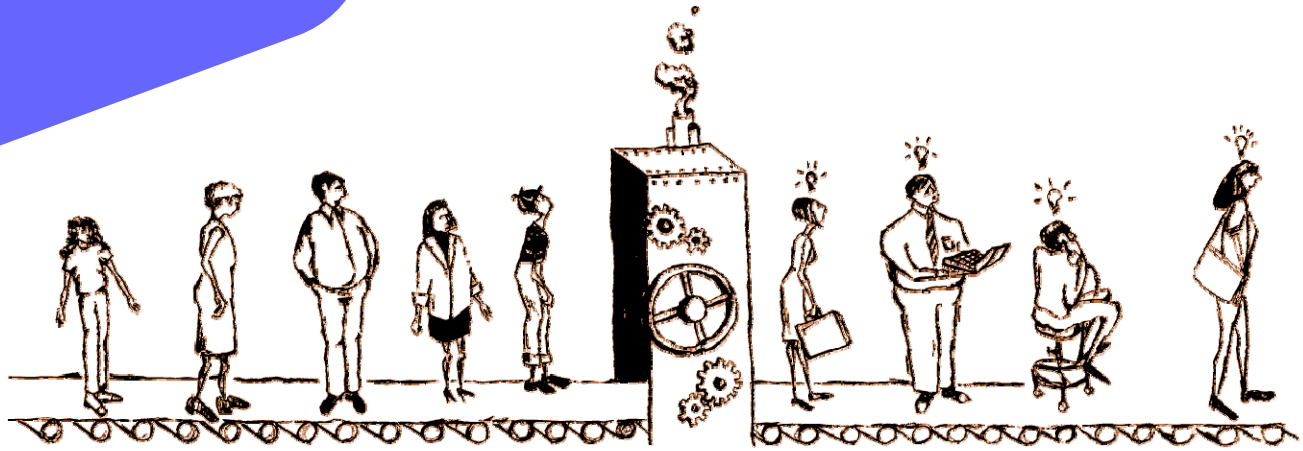


Overview

- Why postgraduate study?
- What are the options?
- How is postgraduate different to undergraduate?
- Where should I go?
- Money
- Applications and interviews

Why?



- Follow a specific area of interest
- Gain additional qualifications required for a specific career
- Increase skills in a particular area
- Change direction / new knowledge and skills
- Unemployed and nothing else to do!

What?

Research or taught course?

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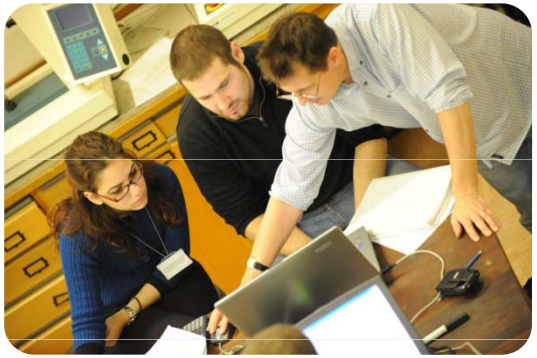
D-level: PhD, EngD…

- Typically three or four year research studentships
- May be supplemented by masters sessions or specific research student training schemes

M-level: MA, MSc, MPhil…

- Typically one year
- Mostly a combination of taught and research but some just research

Taught programmes



- Good for extending skills and knowledge
- Help you build confidence as an independent learner
- Generally a more structured introduction into research

but,

- Will generally require self-funding
- Research project quite short
- Taught elements may be related to undergraduate classes

Research programmes

- Good for leading into a career in research
- Good for highly motivated, independent learners
- Often come fully funded

but,

- Can be very demanding
- Quality of project, supervision, and facilities can vary

Differences to undergraduate study

Taught programmes:

- Lectures, tutorials, seminars, practical classes
- Greater emphasis on independent study – timetable may include study time
- Assessment often tries to mimic ‘real-life’ scenarios
- Generally require more discussion and critical evaluation rather than description or recall of facts and figures

Differences to undergraduate study

Research programmes:

- Need for self-motivation, independent study, time management skills
- Generally expected to work ‘office hours’ but extra as and when required
- More like a job, but remember the person you are working for is you!

Where?
Generally Universities or Research Institutions

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Considerations:

- Is the University well respected in the field?
- What proportion of it's students are postgraduate?
- What are it's graduate employment statistics?
- Does it have the facilities you need?
- Can you afford to / do you want to live there?

Money: Funding study and living expenses

Masters programmes:

- Generally annual fees of about £4-5K for a UK/EU student; over £13,000 for an overseas student
- Always ask about bursaries!
- Few sponsored studentships
- Career development/postgraduate loans from high street banks

Money: Funding study and living expenses

Research Programmes:

- Many will be sponsored by a charity, company or research council
- UK/EU fees may be paid for you and you may receive a tax-free stipend to cover living expenses
- Ask if additional expenses are also covered
- Overseas students may have to pay difference between UK/EU and overseas fees
- Possibility of ‘self-funding’ / proposing own project

Money: Funding study and living expenses

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- Parents?!
- Part-time study (Check delivery schedule)
- Scholarships
  - check University web pages
  - will usually offer a list of sources of scholarships applicable to their courses

Finding a Masters

- Web:
  - University websites
  - www.findamasters.com
  - www.prospects.ac.uk
  - www.newscientiststudy.com

- Journals: New Scientist, Nature
- Local press
- Word of mouth

Finding a Phd

- Web:
  - University websites
  - www.findaphd.com
  - www.jobs.ac.uk

- Journals
- Personal contacts
- Careers service

Applications and interviews

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Taught programmes

- Usually a straightforward paper or online application process
- Most Universities will require references, and will need to see your degree certificate, but will make a conditional offer if you are still studying
- Most Universities will require a 2:2 or above
- Some Universities may offer a place without interview, but most will invite you for at least an informal discussion
- Open days may be useful

Tips: Applying for taught programmes

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- Visit the University, even if they do not insist on an interview
- Emphasis will be on making sure the course is right for you – Universities want you to get a good job and improve their reputation and employment statistics!
- Ask what opportunity you will get to practice the skills that you need for the future
- Ask about previous research projects and where previous students have got jobs
- Be enthusiastic and show that you are willing to work hard!

Applications and interviews

Research programmes:

- Usually high competition for the best studentships
- Many supervisors will look for a 1st class degree
- Application plus interview
- Supervisors will look for high academic performance but also good communication skills, team players, high levels of motivation
- Will want to take on students who are both very capable and have good ‘staying power’

Tips: Applying for Research studentships

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- Work hard now to get good grades and good references!
- Phone the research supervisor before you apply and ask about the research project – work out what skills they want
- Look up the research supervisors research publications
- See what other work is being done in the area – make sure you are aware of the main challenges in the field and think about what needs to be done to address these

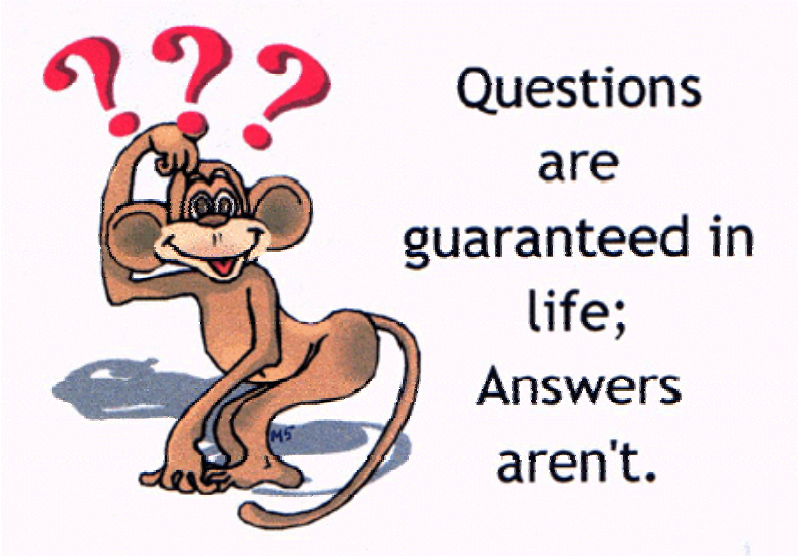
Final thoughts

- A good postgraduate qualification may help you get a good job

but,

- Postgraduate study does not suit everyone
- If in doubt, go for a one-year course rather than a longer one
- Getting a job for a year or two might help focus thoughts and provide finances!

Any questions



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