

Doing a Master's degree

This page tells you about Master's degrees and some possible sources of funding.

At any stage of your career you can consider undertaking further academic study such as a Master's degree.

Master's degrees are available in a very wide range of healthcare and public health-related subjects. Some are specifically aimed at people who are already qualified in a certain field such as medicine, surgery or dentistry. Others are more general and are also open to those with other qualifications and backgrounds, for example in healthcare science and nursing. For some roles, such as pharmacy, you will need to take a Master's degree in order to first qualify in your profession.

A Master's degree is a postgraduate qualification, although it is occasionally possible to take a Master's if you do not have an undergraduate degree. You might be accepted with other qualifications or suitable experience. The usual minimum entry requirements are a 2:1 (upper second) honours degree.

There are two main types of master's degree:

- taught Master's – broadly similar in teaching methods to an undergraduate degree, but at a more advanced level. You will normally have lectures, exams, essays, dissertations and group projects
- research Master's – you will undertake a thesis on a particular topic, which will occupy more than half your time. There is often little or no teaching and you work on your own with a supervisor

A Master's degree typically takes one year full-time or two-three years part-time to complete. The length can vary, with some courses being longer than this, particularly for part-time options, which may last for four years.

Why do a Master's degree?

- to develop your knowledge for a current role
- in some medical or surgical specialties, such as trauma and orthopaedic surgery, you may be expected to gain a Master's in a related discipline
- you need a qualification or specific knowledge for a career change
- to improve your job prospects
- as a first step to an academic career
- to study a subject that interests you

Points to consider

Do I have time to study?

You should consider your work, childcare or other commitments. You could choose a Master's related to your current job, which you can complete part-time while working.

So bear in mind the impact this may have on your personal and social life. For example, you may have to use annual leave to complete assignments. You will also need to be organised and self-motivated to do all the extra study required.

Which type of course should I choose?

Consider the following course options:

- does the course have an academic focus and is it useful for a future research career, for example a Master's in research
- is the course practical and related to your work? Some employers may prefer this
- how about the mix of academic and practical?
- distance learning is more flexible if you have other commitments
- face-to-face learning provides more contact with tutors and other students

Typical Master's degrees include:

- MA clinical education
- MA public health
- MBA (masters in business administration)
- MRes (for example a master's in health research)

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How do I research courses?

- use UCAS ^[1] or Prospects Postgraduate Study ^[2] to search for courses
- attend university and college open days. Talk to tutors and current students
- find out what previous students from the course have gone on to do. This information may be available in the form of destination statistics
- consider the tutor-student ratio
- consider the amount of contact time/teaching days
- compare courses using The Guardian University League Table 2017 ^[3] or The Complete University Guide University League Table 2017 ^[4]. Remember to use league tables with care – a course at the top of a league table might not be the best one for you! Your individual research is key to finding the right course.

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How much will it cost?

Course fees for Master's degrees differ from institution to institution and can be appreciably higher if you're classed as an international student. You should check individual institution websites for details. Consider carefully the returns this study will give for your investment in time and money.

If a Master's is considered relevant for your career development, your employer may wholly or partly fund your studies.

- ## Where can I find funding?

Possible sources of funding include:

- Research Councils UK ^[5] which lists the seven research councils, including the Medical Research Council (MRC)
- Wellcome Trust ^[6]
- bursaries and scholarships offered by individual universities/colleges
- postgraduate medicine scholarships found through Scholarship Search ^[7]
- NHS National Institute for Health Research ^[8] (NIHR)
- postgraduate loan for Master's degrees from the Student Loans Company – this will probably cover your tuition fees and materials.
- study leave funding is sometimes possible with individual master's degrees that are part of a training programme, particularly in medicine and surgery.

You can use Prospects Funding Postgraduate Study ^[9] to search a wide range of funding sources by subject area or keyword.

- ## How do I apply?

- apply directly to individual institutions
- some (but not all) applications are handled via UCAS ^[1] and UKPASS ^[10]

Check to see if there is an official deadline for your chosen courses. In any case, you should apply at least eight months before the course starts to have the greatest chance of success.

Source URL: <https://www.healthcareers.nhs.uk/career-planning/developing-your-health-career/doing-masters-degree>

Links

[1] <https://www.ucas.com/>

- [2] http://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate_study.htm
- [3] <https://www.theguardian.com/education/ng-interactive/2016/may/23/university-league-tables-2017>
- [4] <http://www.thecompleteuniversityguide.co.uk/league-tables/rankings>
- [5] <http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/funding/howtoapply/>
- [6] <http://www.wellcome.ac.uk/index.htm>
- [7] <http://www.scholarship-search.org.uk/>
- [8] <http://www.nihr.ac.uk/>
- [9] http://www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm
- [10] <https://pgapp.ukpass.ac.uk/ukpasspgapp/login.jsp>