Where to find graduate study courses and research opportunities

If you are looking for a Masters programme or doctoral research opening, here are some suggested sources.

FindAMasters.com
www.findamasters.com
A large database of courses, including some international ones.

FindAPhD.com
www.FindAPhD.com
A large database of funded research opportunities. Useful if any of these are close enough to your field of research interest.

FindAProfessionalDoctorate.com
www.professionaldoctorates.com
Database of research opportunities combining academic and vocation/professional training.

FindAPostDoc.com
www.findapostdoc.com
A database of post-doctoral research jobs rather than courses.

Hobsons Postgrad
www.postgrad.hobsons.com
Search for postgraduate courses in the UK and find information on sources of funding.

Knowledge Transfer Partnerships (KTP)
www.ktponline.org.uk
KTP is a programme helping businesses to improve their competitiveness and productivity through the better use of knowledge, technology and skills that reside within the UK knowledge base. Through a KTP project you can simultaneously work and do academic study/research towards a postgraduate qualification.

Prospects
www.prospects.ac.uk/links/pgdbase
Within the section of the prospects website devoted to postgraduate study there is this courses database. The other pages about types of study, funding, choosing a course, etc. are also worthwhile.

Postgrad.com
www.postgrad.com
This site has course listings as well as plenty of advice about finding and choosing a programme, university rankings, life as a postgraduate student, online forums and some events information such as open days.

Postgraduate Studentships
www.postgraduateships.co.uk
Information about the different types of funding opportunities open to potential postgraduates (master’s and doctoral level).

TARGETcourses
http://targetcourses.co.uk
Website that compares postgraduate courses in the UK for graduates considering further study. It has been compiled with UCAS and also has institution profiles with information on research and funding.

UKPASS
www.ukpass.ac.uk > Students > How to apply
Site for searching graduate courses (taught and research). It also has a central applications system for use with certain participating universities (King’s is not currently among the participants)

Unistats
www.unistats.com
Quick search engine for universities and courses where you can compare average UCAS points achieved, career prospects and student satisfaction between colleges.

Funding Sites

King’s Postgraduate Funding Pages
http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/pg/funding/sources/index.aspx
Excellent range of resources and advice for King’s applicants.

Research Professional
www.researchresearch.com
A complete funding opportunities alert service for researchers with daily news from over 30 countries around the world.
Scholarship search
www.scholarship-search.org.uk

Search tool for scholarships, covering both undergraduate and postgraduate study

**Other useful sources of information**

Developing your own research proposal
If there are no established programmes researching in the area that interests you, you can develop your own proposal and hawk this around academics who know enough about the field to supervise your research. If accepted by a supervisor you will then need to search for funding.

Vitae
www.vitae.ac.uk

This website supports the personal, professional and career development of doctoral researchers and research staff in higher education institutions and research institutes.

**Funding**

Some of the sites mentioned above also have information on funding. Other sources of information are:

**Research Councils**

For UK students the main source of grants for graduate study is the appropriate subject research council. Your subject falls on the borderline between different research councils apply to both. Each council has a different application deadline and procedure, but you must apply for them through your institution and certain residency criteria apply. If you receive an award, it will cover your tuition fees, as well as providing you with a maintenance grant.

- Arts and Humanities Research Council
  http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/Pages/Home.aspx
- Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council
  www.bbsrc.ac.uk
- Economic and Social Research Council
  www.esrc.ac.uk
- Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council
  www.epsrc.ac.uk
- Medical Research Council
  www.mrc.ac.uk
- Natural Environmental Research Council
  www.nerc.ac.uk
- Science and Technology Facilities Council*
  www.stfc.ac.uk

*formed from a merger of Particle Physics and Astronomy Research Council (PPARC) and Council for the Central Laboratory of the Research Councils (CCLRC)

**Professional and Career Development Loans**

https://www.gov.uk/career-development-loans/overview

You may choose to fund your studies through one of these loans – but don’t mistake them for a variety of student loan because the repayment terms are much more stringent.

**Life Long Learning**

www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cd1

Information on Careers development loans.

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**Funding for students with disabilities**

There are other sources of funding available that aim to help students with disabilities cover additional expenses incurred as a result of their disability (such as a note taker for lectures, adaptive equipment, additional travel expenses). Contact the disability or welfare advisers at your prospective institution or go to www.skill.org.uk

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Postgraduate Funding Tips

Applying for PhD and Master’s funding: Getting Started
Funding for a PhD or Master’s is, for many, a financial necessity. But it is also a selling point that can enhance your career prospects after the degree: a demonstrated ability to secure funding successfully will be looked on favourably by universities and organisations that rely on external sources of funding. Obviously, the more prestigious and competitive (naturally, the two generally run side by side) an award is, the more highly it will be valued – at least within academia. So it’s worth trying to get your head around the funding application process as early as you can in order to give yourself the best chance possible. This handout gives some general information and lists some of the key resources on the subject.

Eligibility
Before you so much as bookmark applications that you want to apply for, it’s worth checking and double checking the eligibility criteria of the grant/award/scholarship/bursary in question. They can be very specific indeed! For example, one fund is for vegetarians and vegans only; another for those involved or with immediate family involved in the baking trade! However, more usual restrictions on eligibility relate to:

- Subject / discipline (sometimes this is very specific, e.g. ‘open to anyone writing a thesis on some aspect of late 15th-century English history’)
- Financial need
- Nationality / country of residence
- Academic merit
- Gender: some are for women only
- Student status: some are for current or final-year students only, or will only consider applicants with at least two or three years left of study (in the case of PhDs)
- Degree type: check whether the funding is for taught Master’s degrees, PhD or postdoctoral research
- Disability: some are specifically for disabled students or those with long-term health / mental conditions or learning difficulties

Types of Funding
Remember, while some funds are designed to support your entire degree, others are intended for specific purposes, such as conference attendance, emergency financial support and the fourth year of the PhD (since few funding schemes cover more than three years full-time). Do take advantage of these small grants – every little helps, and many students are not aware of their existence!

Tips on Applying for Funding
- Start researching funding and compiling your application as early as possible. Many funders have an annual deadline for applications, so you don’t want to miss it. Also, don’t underestimate how long it can take to write a good research proposal, especially if it’s your first attempt at one
- If you and your department are eligible, apply for research council funding as a matter of priority (i.e. the Arts and Humanities Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council and five others – see [www.rcuk.ac.uk/about/Aboutrc](http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/about/Aboutrc)). These are often the most competitive grants, but also the most prestigious
- International students: check what your country’s government / British Council offers
- Spend time getting your research proposal (if required) into an excellent shape – it forms a crucial, often decisive, part of the funding application process. See our other handout, ‘PhD proposals for Arts & Humanities funding’ for guidance
- Decide on your referees in good time before applying; you need to build in time to contact them and approach others if they decline
- Likewise, build in time for obtaining any documents requested by the funding body, such as academic transcripts
- In the case of PhD funding applications, get your (proposed) supervisor’s input; he or she is likely to have experience of the funding application process and the criteria that panels look out for

Finding Funders: Some Helpful Resources
King’s Postgraduate Funding database
[www.kcl.ac.uk/graduate/funding/database](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/graduate/funding/database)
Includes funds for emergency support; funding from associations/small organisations; scholarships and trusts; funding for conference attendance; graduate teaching assistant schemes

King’s Graduate School Funding
[www.kcl.ac.uk/study/pg/funding/sources/gradsch.aspx](http://www.kcl.ac.uk/study/pg/funding/sources/gradsch.aspx)
Funding schemes for postgraduate taught and research students are added to this page as they become available.
Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding
https://internal.kcl.ac.uk/student/grad-school/funding/altfundguide.aspx
Only 7% of students manage to get research council funding or university scholarships. But there are also plenty of charities and trusts that provide funding, open to students regardless of subject or nationality. Also gives plenty of guidance on funding applications. TIP: You’ll need to be logged into the King’s network to use this.

British Council Database
www.educationuk.org/global/articles/scholarships-financial-support
Database listing thousands of scholarships, including many open to international students and scholarships and schemes partly managed or administered by the British Council itself.

HEFCE Postgraduate Support Scheme
For the 2015-16 academic year HEFCE (the Higher Education Funding Council for England) will make a total of £50 million of funding available for students on taught postgraduate Masters courses through its Postgraduate Support Scheme (PSS). This funding takes the form of a series of £10,000 bursaries, created with £5,000 of HEFCE funds and matched with £5000 from the institution. The bursaries are aimed at prospective postgraduate students from under-represented backgrounds who have paid the higher rate of undergraduate tuition fees. There are over 10,000 bursaries at universities across England, and King’s are offering 273 awards across 230 courses. See the complete list of institutions offering awards here and visit FindAMasters.com for more information and a list of FAQs.

Jobs.ac.uk
www.jobs.ac.uk
It is worth signing up for emails from the academic jobs website as they often advertise Master’s and PhD studentships (frequently team-based)

Turn To Us
http://www.turn2us.org.uk/grants_search.aspx
Another great resource, a highly recommended source of grants and other funding.

Prospects.ac.uk
www.prospects.ac.uk/funding_postgraduate_study.htm
Postgraduate funding database and guidance on different types of funding, including bank loans, employer sponsorship and disability-related funding.

Scholarship Search
www.scholarship-search.org.uk
UK scholarships database.

The Ultimate Postgraduate Funding Guide
www.postgrad.com/editorial/fees_and_funding/funding/postgraduate_student_funding_guide
Guidance and resources on postgraduate funding in Europe.

Finally... Don’t Give Up!
If you don’t succeed the first time, or even the second, try again! The author of this handout missed the AHRC deadline the first time around, started her PhD part-time, and was turned down when she applied in her first year – before successfully securing the AHRC grant the following year. Always check the restrictions on eligibility carefully – often even the most prestigious funding bodies accept applications midway through a PhD. In the meantime, support yourself through part-time work or bank loans, consider transferring to part-time student status and consider alternative, smaller funding schemes. Charities and trusts, for example, normally offer grants of between £500 and £2,000, but by securing multiple awards you can accumulate a decent sum – see the Alternative Guide to Postgraduate Funding for advice on these kinds of applications (above). These bodies also tend to have multiple application deadlines throughout the year.

Other Ways of Reducing your Budget

- Get a 16-25 Railcard for 1/3 off rail fares across the UK (£30, www.16-25railcard.co.uk, also available to full-time students over 25)
- Take advantage of student discounts at participating shops, restaurants, cinemas, bars, gyms and cafés simply by flashing your KCL student card; discounts listed here: www.thestudentroom.co.uk/wiki/Student_discounts
- Consider paying £12 for an NUS Extra card for yet more discounts (www.nus.org.uk/en/nus-extra), or joining non-student discount schemes like the ACE Card (£19.95, theacecard.com – discounts on entertainment and leisure establishments in London) or TasteCard (£79.99, www.tastecard.co.uk, 50% off or 2 for 1 deals at participating restaurants)

Further Advice

KCL Careers & Employability: current students can book one-to-one appointments with careers consultants and application advisors. Tailored advice on part-time work, CVs, cover letters and careers after the Master’s or PhD. careers@kcl.ac.uk / 020 7848 7134

KCL Graduate School: confidential advice to prospective and current postgraduates on a variety of topics, including funding, via email, telephone and one-to-one appointments. graduateschool@kcl.ac.uk / 020 7848 4146

KCL Funding Office: confidential advice to prospective and current students on issues such as funding opportunities, living expenses and student loans. funding@kcl.ac.uk / 020 7848 4362/4363/4471/4472

Created: June 2014, by Dr Anabel Inge (recipient of three sources of PhD funding, including the AHRC)

The Careers Group believes that all information provided in this publication is correct at the time of publication

This material can be provided in alternate formats. Please discuss your requirements with a member of staff.
Writing good personal statements takes time. You’ll need to make several drafts and ask tutors, friends, and others to review your statement before you submit it. Book an appointment with one of our application advisers to check your statement too.

Often you’ll be given very exact guidance on what evidence and information to include: it is vital that you pay attention to these instructions, and include only what is relevant. On other occasions, you’ll write a statement with fewer constraints or specific instructions. In either case, the following ideas should help you to structure your answers, and create the best possible impression.

The opening Paragraph
Start with a strong opening paragraph to catch the reader’s attention – examples might be a personal experience, an explanation of why you love this area of study, or a thought-provoking statement concerning the academic discipline. It may be easier to write the main body, and then return to this paragraph at the end.

The main body
The reader wants to know you and your motivations. The main body of the statement is your chance to present yourself. You don’t need to cover every single point below, but a strong application will demonstrate that you have considered these kind of questions.

Why them? – Why this is exactly the right course for you.
• Why do you want to do the course/research?
• Why this subject? How did you become interested in it? Why does it still interest you?
• Why this university? Is there specific expertise, or are there academic staff you want to research or study with?
• Are there particular options or modules that interest you?
• Are there specific resources locally that appeal to you? Museum collections, libraries, field-work locations or lab equipment?
• Has the reputation (through recommendations, league-tables etc.) of the course inspired you?
• Are you attracted by opportunities for collaboration or work placements?
• Have you attended any Open Days or other visits?

Why you? – How your skills and experiences equip you for this course.
• What academic skills do you offer? e.g. technical, language, computing, research methods, awards, essay competitions, previous (relevant) work experience/shadowing.
• Which of your undergrad modules & courses are particularly relevant, and why?
• What have you done outside of your study to enhance your understanding of the topic? e.g. conferences, membership of organisations & societies, relevant travel, blogging.
• What personal skills can you offer, which would be useful in academia? Give examples. e.g. team work, time management project management, resilience, effective communication.
• What are your personal strengths?

What’s next? What will you get out of the course, and what you hope it will lead.
• A detailed career plan isn’t necessary, but you should show how this course fits in with your general aspirations.
• What are your career aims?
• Would the course provide a step towards a longer-term goal?
• Are you intending to continue on to a PhD?
• Do you have a broad interest in contributing to a particular issue or field? e.g. social enterprise, public policy, human rights, sustainability.
• Do you have a more specific goal in mind?
• How will your chosen course help you to achieve your goals?
The closing paragraph
Use your closing paragraph to summarise your application, return to any themes you introduced at the beginning and to restate your enthusiasm for the course.

Tips and hints
These tips were provided by careers advisers and academic staff from various universities (with particular thanks to Royal Holloway, University of London, and the University of Oxford).

- Good English, grammar and spelling are essential.
- Don’t use the same statement for all applications.
- Research the university and course/research area.
- Give your statement a structure.
- Demonstrate a strong academic background, motivation and that you have the right skills and qualities.
- Stick to the word limit - usually one or two sides, but pay attention to their requirements.
- Avoid jargon and make it understandable by non-experts.
- Keep the tone positive, enthusiastic and lively in order to convey enthusiasm and make yourself stand out, but remember that this is a document introducing you in a professional capacity.
- It’s a good idea to mention relevant individuals whose work has truly inspired you, but avoid name-dropping for the sake of it, and excessive and evidence-free flattery of the institution or the course.
- Make sure you follow specific instructions. If they ask for evidence and examples, make sure you give them. If they say 'explain in under 200 words', they mean it.

Summary
Your personal statement should demonstrate motivation, enthusiasm and a clear understanding of why you are applying to this particular course, at this particular institution. What experiences have lead you to apply for the course, what will you offer the institution, what will you get out of the course, and what do you want to do after?

Careers & Employability, King’s College London, April 2014

www.kcl.ac.uk/careers