

Postgrad courses

Fulfil your potential with
a higher-level degree

Plus: Abbey Krause
on how an MSc in
mediation added
insight to her role

Postgraduate study A continued rise

The postgraduate degree has never been more popular and studying for a master's is an increasingly well-liked way of boosting your knowledge and career prospects: in 2015-16 more than 500,000 postgrads studied at UK higher education institutions. In this special supplement, we look at the added value of a postgraduate degree, be that full-time, part-time or online.

While traditional campus-based courses remain popular there is growing interest in the flexibility of online study, as one student says: "It was quite an effort, while my friends were going out I stayed in and studied, but it's made a huge difference to my life and career."

If you are unsure about what to study, why not go on an open day for postgrads? At Warwick Business School, for instance, they offer a personalised open day with the opportunity to have a one-to-one with members of staff.

For mature students there is advice on going back to university, which may seem daunting but the rewards are worth it - as Jenni Smyth says: "It's hard work, and you have to get the books out at all hours, but it's been a fantastic experience." Mature student Sarah Glover, who has a master's and a PhD, advises that "getting back into academic writing doesn't take too long - just play to your strengths and focus on your areas of interest".

We also look at marine biology courses, which have risen in popularity thanks in part to the BBC's Blue Planet series. Marine biologist Prof Mark Briffa at Plymouth University says there is no shortage of research avenues "from acidification of the oceans to the aggression of hermit crabs".

Finally, we look at why an MsC in mediation and conflict resolution is highly sought after, as one course leader, says: "Negotiation is an essential process in all human relationships."

Sarah Jewell



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Course focus

What to do with a postgraduate degree in ...

Acting

Acting was a pipe dream for business management student Rick Bithell, until he took the leap and took a master's in professional acting, graduating in 2012. "I'd always done amateur stuff but, with a business degree, I went down another route," he says.

It was his mum who pointed out that the Academy of Live & Recorded Arts' newly opened school in Wigan offered a 15-month intensive programme. "It looked almost too good to be true," says Bithell, 30, who has gone on to do work on stage and television.

He's also co-founded two theatre companies - Plough on Sunday and Troublehouse Theatre - and a youth theatre project: "We're trying to help actors in the north get experience and representation - everything tends to be so London-centric."

6,750
The number of new UK graduates going on to study a master's rose by 6,750 in 2016
Source: HECSU

Although Bithell's business background has benefited his theatre projects, it was the acting course that kickstarted his new career. "The master's helped massively," he says.

"It prepared me on how to conduct myself as an actor - how to view my career as something serious, rather than just an exciting hobby."

Two of his former tutors are now



associate directors of one of his theatre companies. "Drama school is all about what you get out of it - not only in terms of skills, but the contacts and networking too," he says.

Environmental science

How much plastic from the oceans ends up in our table salt? Too much, says Emily Hagggett, 24, who works to help cut the amount of plastic on UK shores.

As part of her integrated master's in environmental science at the University of Southampton, Hagggett researched microplastic pollution, picking up a national environmental research award in the process.

As part of her course, she undertook an internship at the campaigning charity Surfers Against Sewage, going on to work full-time for the organisation after graduating in the summer.

"I landed on my feet because my internship went so well," she says. The research project was timely as her job at the charity is to try to persuade people to cut down on single-use plastics - bottles, straws, disposable cups - as part of a national campaign.

£6k
In 2016, postgraduates earned on average £6,000 more than graduates.
Source: gov.uk

"Currently an estimated 8-12m tonnes of plastic enter the sea each year. People who live inland might not think it affects them, but my research shows it does," she says. Working from a converted tin

mine in Cornwall, she still finds time to surf - a hobby she took up during her degree. "I'm absolutely loving it," she says.

Public healthcare

At 45, midwife Lucy November had already seen more than most health professionals. She had worked with teenage mothers-to-be and in community health in Sierra Leone, west Africa, for three years, before deciding to become more involved in the bigger picture.

"I've always loved the field of public health - understanding what makes us healthy," she says. "I decided I wanted to do more than just meddle - I wanted to take public health research seriously." In 2010, November graduated from

88%
In 2016, 88% and 87% of postgraduates and graduates were employed, respectively
Source: GOV.UK

a one-year master's in public health at the London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine. "I revelled in it. Whatever module I was on, it seemed to be taught by the top expert in the field. [Renowned psychiatrist] Vikram Patel taught us global mental health for goodness sake!"

Funded by medical research charity Wellbeing of Women, she spent last year investigating why one in seven pregnant girls under the age of 17 died from maternal causes in Sierra Leone - in the UK it's about one in 10,000: "I've found that social determinants are key - abandonment, stigma, poverty"

November has received funding to try out a mentoring scheme for vulnerable teenagers in Sierra Leone. She's also researching the training needs of parent and child foster carers in the UK.

Helena Pozniak

Toothsome research

Fossils of some of the earliest known ancestors to humans have been discovered in Dorset by an undergraduate at the University of Portsmouth. Grant Smith found fossilised teeth believed to belong to small furry mammals, dating back 145m years, as he sifted through rock samples for his dissertation. Dr Steve Sweetman, research fellow at the university who identified the teeth and published the findings, said his "jaw dropped" when he first saw them.

Rise in teenage self-harm

Self-harm among teenage girls rose by 68% in three years from 2011-14, a study has found. Researchers at the

University of Manchester looked at data from nearly 700 GP practices across the UK and found that self-harm among young people aged 10-19 was three times more common among girls than boys. Most striking was the big increase in self-harm for girls aged 13 to 16.

Dealing with digital data

Know your SEO from your lead generation? Nearly 30 universities now offer a master's in digital marketing. "We're in an age of digital disruption," says Lisa McCann, lead digital marketing instructor at Red Academy, which offers shorter, hands-on postgraduate courses in London. With the explosion in available data, marketers need to be on their toes, she says. **HP**

Why study in ... Bristol

For nights out

With historic buildings, a lively waterfront and the hippest graffiti, Bristol seems to have everything. Famously foodie, Bristol's regenerated docks are packed with harbourside bars. Wapping Wharf's

Cargo hosts award-winning restaurants, from pie shops to bubble tea to indie curry shacks, housed in converted shipping containers.

Live music is big in Bristol, with small gigs at pubs such as the Louisiana and the Fleece, and big-name bands playing the O2 Academy and the Anson Rooms. Clubs are rife - students

love the vibe at the Attic Bar, while Lizard Lounge is cheap, Basement 45 is intimate, Mbargo has live bands and Thekla sees some of the region's best DJs play in its converted trawler venue. Motion, one of the bigger clubs, also lures international DJs to its warehouse location.

Where to live

To the west and close to the university, Clifton is Georgian, villagey, but pricey. Just downhill, towards the waterfront, are the slightly cheaper Cliftonwood and Hotwells areas, still Georgian and popular with students. Gloucester Road is lively and packed with independent shops, pubs and cafes. Kingsdown and Cotham to the north are mostly leafy and residential, with a mix of modern student housing and converted larger houses. Montpellier and St Paul's to the east are popular with students who like the clubs, the food and arty scene. In its busy city centre, Bristol hosts larger, purpose-built housing. Redland, with its Victorian terraces, runs from Clifton Down to Gloucester Road and is also home to a large student population.

Galleries, parks and Brunel

Voted the best place to live in Britain (the Sunday Times, 2017), Bristol is scenic, quirky - think board-game cafes and naked cycling protests - and home to the likes of street artist Banksy and the renowned St Nicholas market. There are galleries aplenty, some 450 parks and green spaces, and great shopping. Bristol Museum & Art Gallery houses artists such as Constable and Pissarro, while Arnolfini near the harbourside is one of Europe's leading centres for the contemporary arts. Brunel's Clifton suspension bridge is the city's most iconic landmark. Events punctuate the year, from a popular half marathon to the International Balloon Fiesta to music food and street art festivals. **HP**

News In brief

Big, fat research

Could university research help reduce "fatbergs" - the vast lumps of congealed oil, grease, baby wipes and more that are blocking drains worldwide - recently a 130-tonne fatberg was found blocking a sewer in east London. How households dispose their fats and waste is the subject of a report compiled by research teams at the

universities of Sheffield and Manchester. It says we need to come up with new waste solutions and even the infrastructure to turn fatbergs into energy.

Fighting fake news

How to combat fake news? Researchers from Oxford University's Oxford Internet Institute broke the story that social media was being exploited to spread false information - picking up an international award in the process. "It's a global problem," said principal investigator Prof Philip Howard, "and it's running public life into the ground." The institute is recruiting postdoctoral researchers to investigate the ethics of artificial intelligence (deadline: 19 January 2018).



A postgrad to suit every taste

Online courses and part-time study give a degree of flexibility to fit in with students' lifestyles, says **Gavan Naden**

Full-time, part-time, online, or a mix of all three - the variety of postgraduate study options can be bewildering. This wide choice, however, does give scope to suit prospective students' differing circumstances and lifestyles.

While traditional campus-based courses remain the most popular, there is an increasing interest in online study, with its flexibility and easy access. Edinburgh University's head of submissions, Iain Sutherland, says that online courses are proving particularly attractive to those students who may have family and work commitments.

As with most universities, he says, advice is available on Edinburgh's website: "We have a postgraduate recruitment team to help and run postgraduate open days, along with online sessions to give people an overview of what the courses involve."

“
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While my friends went out, I stayed in. But it's made a huge difference to my life and career

Manchester University's head of distance learning operations, Ian Hutt, says that online postgraduate courses take between two and a half to five years to complete. "Each module runs over 10 weeks and we like people to commit about 15 hours a week to study. We have study advisers to help people schedule their time."

And if a course dovetails with what they've done before, he says, "it can work well - especially as many come with experience and renewed vigour from previous learning".

Matt Broadway-Horner preferred the campus option and, after searching for a full-time postgraduate course that would accredit him as a psychotherapist, enrolled at Goldsmiths, University of London. "The full-time course required one full day



per week of teaching and supervision in a class, plus one clinical morning. It made my week rather tight, but that kept me focused on getting the assignments done on time."

It's proved very beneficial as Broadway-Horner recently returned to Goldsmiths in a teaching and scholarly position, and has authored books and research on the LGBT experience, particularly sexual and mental health, and the ageing process.

Alternatively, part-time study in class, while demanding, allows students to keep working while they study. Mother of two girls, Jan Noble, opted for this route, so she could maintain her job, but also enjoy interaction with other students.

"I was in my mid-40s and working as a nurse manager in a hospice. I went into King's College London to do a part-time master's in advanced nursing practice in palliative care," she says. "I was very privileged, as funding was arranged by my employer. However, if I left within two years after completion, I would have had to pay a percentage back.

"It was quite an effort - while my friends were going out, I stayed in and studied for three years. But it's made a huge difference to my life and career."

For working parents, online courses can be the only way to study as a postgraduate
Getty

Why study online?

- Online courses provide opportunities to learn and engage with people from different backgrounds and experiences.
- You can study anywhere in the world, provided you have access to the internet and a computer.
- Consider testing the waters beforehand by doing a free Mooc (massive open online course). Providers include Coursera, and FutureLearn.
- Online postgraduate degrees should provide the same standard of teaching as a "campus" degree.
- Use the Sconul scheme that grants access to a range of institutional libraries.
- If you have a family, or are working, self-discipline is essential, so set easy, manageable goals.
- Keep notes, otherwise you'll find yourself continually returning to the online platform.
- Many courses can be extended over several years if students require extra time to complete the postgraduate course.
- Consider asking your employer to finance the course, as it may well benefit them as well as you. **GN**



Negotiation is an essential process in all human relationships, from the workplace to global affairs Getty

Three's company for rebuilding peace

The art of negotiation and dispute resolution is sorely needed in an age of strife, be it domestic or international, says **Lucy Jolin**

From trade negotiators thrashing out Brexit details, to family mediators helping couples part on amicable terms, conflict and negotiation skills are in demand - and postgraduate courses are an ideal place to hone them.

"If you take it right back to basics, you have three individuals in a room," says Charlie Irvine, course leader of Strathclyde University's LLM/MSc/PGDip in mediation and conflict resolution. "Two are the decision-makers - the people with the dispute.

"The role of the third person is delicate, as they must enter and change the conflict situation for the better by listening and observing without bias.

“The role of the third person in a dispute situation is to listen and observe without bias”

"When students start, they often think that their job is to act persuasively - to help one party see what the other is thinking. But that's not the job of the mediator. That's a kind of advocacy.

"I think the mediator is often helping each side to see their own position more clearly, and to think through often unthought-through consequences."

Mediation, Irvine says, needs to be practised in real life, not just in the classroom. To that end, he founded the Strathclyde Mediation Clinic, a free service in which students deal with real cases, ranging from disputes over loans to problems with utility providers.

These are very transferable skills, says Joanne Atkinson, who runs the LLM alternative dispute resolution

Let's discuss mediation

- 10,000 commercial mediations were performed in 2016, an increase of 5% on 2014.
- The mediation industry saves businesses an estimated £2.8bn a year.
- In 2016, there were more non-lawyer mediators (57%) than lawyer mediators for the first time.
- Family breakdown costs the UK an estimated £48bn every year.
- 29% of employers said they had used mediation in the past year.
- 46% of employers believed that mediation was an effective approach to dealing with workplace conflict, while 13% said that they had had a relationship that would have benefited from mediation. **LJ**

Sources: CEDR; CIPD; Relationships Foundation Cost of Family Failure Index

course at the University of Portsmouth. "There are many opportunities in this marketplace - for people with a background in law, but also those from HR, management and public-sector backgrounds," she says.

"Our course involves learning the skills to help parties resolve their disputes, using arbitration, mediation and conciliation, without having to resort to litigation. The legal profession is changing: litigation is costly and time-consuming, and is increasingly seen as a last resort."

The Westminster Law School offers two postgraduate taught courses in conflict and dispute prevention and resolution: the MA in conflict prevention, dispute resolution; and the international and commercial dispute resolution law LLM.

The modules offered on the MA course are mainly concerned with law and the "soft skills" of negotiation. The LLM course melds law and the "hard skills" of adjudication - litigation and arbitration - in the contexts of conflicts and disputes.

A survey of students taking the two courses provides an insight into the wide-ranging nature of their skills. Backgrounds range from an Algerian diplomat-negotiator to a Kenyan human rights and peace worker to an English arbitrator in quantity surveying and construction.

"Negotiation is an essential process in all human relationships, particularly in community affairs, national and international businesses, and international affairs," says creator and course leader Richard Earle.

"The skill of negotiation is of high value in the workplace, and the alternative dispute resolution processes, based on negotiation, can be of considerable additional value to employers."

'Conflict is everywhere in our lives'

An MSc in mediation helped to give depth to Abbey Krause's work, improving her knowledge of the theory behind conflict resolution. The course has proved invaluable, she tells **Lucy Jolin**

Conflict is in our communities, our families and our workplaces ... it is everywhere in our lives," says Abbey Krause, mediator at the Cyrenians, a charity supporting vulnerable and homeless people. "And it can have a real impact on people's health and wellbeing. When I came upon the practice of mediation, which helps people to manage conflict, I knew I want to do it."

Krause studied social anthropology and social policy at Edinburgh University, graduating in 2009. When she left, she volunteered for the Cyrenians and took a course with the Scottish Community Mediation Centre. "I was hooked," she says. She spent the next three and a half years working at East Lothian Community Mediation

Abbey Krause, mediator at homeless charity Cyrenians

Service as a community mediator, mediating between neighbours in dispute about everything from barking dogs to too-high hedges.

In 2013, she began Strathclyde University's MSc in mediation and conflict resolution, which she self-funded and studied part-time. "I wanted something that would give me more depth to my practice and knowledge in mediation and conflict resolution. We covered a whole range of conflict or dispute areas. One thing that really stood out for me was looking at the dynamics of conflict - the stuff around why people behave the way they do.

"Linking the theory with the practice was also very beneficial. I have an understanding of the skills that we use in the process. But what made the course really interesting for me was

being able to think about why we do what we do as mediators, why we use certain skills and tools, and why we practise certain interventions."

Krause's current work at the Cyrenians involves working with families - the chief cause of homelessness in Scotland, she says, is relationship breakdown. "We help them to think about what is difficult in their relationships and lives, and find solutions and agreements that are going to suit everyone."

She's also designing and delivering training for the Cyrenians Scottish Centre for Conflict Resolution, and guest lecturing at Queen Margaret University. "Again, it's the emphasis on 'this is what we do - and this is why we do it, in this particular way'. The MSc has really helped me with that."



“One thing that stood out for me was looking at the dynamics of conflict - why people behave the way they do”

Mature students

Never too old for new tricks

Going back to university to study may seem daunting, but the rewards are worth it, says **Gavan Naden**

Age is not a barrier when it comes to learning. About 40% of mature students studying at university are over the age of 30, some in their 50s and 60s. Many have mortgages, families and are in full-time employment.

Although the prospect of returning to education, essay writing and mixing with younger students can seem daunting, having a few extra years on your peers can be a distinct advantage. Ucas says that universities are happy to accept older students as most arrive with high levels of enthusiasm, commitment and additional life experience.

Returning to university as a mature student can give your career a new lease of life
Getty

After an 11-year break from education, Philip Hodgson, 40, is studying for an MBA at Bath University. But he admits it's been a challenge organising both family life and study.

"There's a lot of juggling. I have a young son and if he's ill it's a case of should I stay at home or should my wife, who works three days a week?" He believes, however, that the course will change his life and career. "I take it a lot more seriously than I would have done 10 years ago," he says.

After being laid off, single mum Jenni Smyth, 38, invested in her future by using her redundancy money to return to education. She took a full-time psychology course, and intends to go on to do a master's. "When I



first arrived at Manchester University I wanted the full student experience, and being older means I'm a lot more focused on academia and less likely to go partying.

"I find being a student a little more flexible compared with work, and the kids love me being a student. Admittedly it's hard work, and you have to get the books out at all hours, but it's been a fantastic experience."

Smyth recommends seeking out support and advice on university websites. Manchester also arranges meetings with staff members during its adults returning to education sessions.

Sarah Glozer, 34, returned to education twice. The first time she completed a master's after working for a consultancy firm, and more recently completed a PhD at Nottingham University in corporate social responsibility. "I worked for four and half years for Cadbury, before returning for the PhD programme," she says. "They were both full-time courses, which allowed me to be fully immersed in the role."

Her advice? "Getting back into academic writing doesn't take too long. Just play to your strengths and focus on your areas of interest."

Open days

Getting a taste of what's to come

Attending an open day, on campus or online, is the best way to ensure the right fit, says **Lucy Jolin**

Open days have long been the traditional way for undergraduates to decide where and what they want to study. Now, more universities are offering open days to prospective postgrads, too. So how do you get the best out of them?

A good open day will take into account the different needs of postgraduate students. "The most crucial element," says James Hadfield, postgraduate marketing officer at Nottingham Trent University, "is detailed course content. Prospective students will have a desire to understand how the course is going to enhance their existing knowledge and, therefore, their career."



"Details regarding scholarship schemes or alumni discount opportunities are also important, as the availability of funding streams can determine if study is a viable option."

At Warwick Business School, postgraduate open days are "more intimate, in comparison to the undergraduate events", says Magda Brown, assistant business development and recruitment manager.

"We offer a personalised approach and an opportunity to have a one-to-one conversation with members of staff."

Try before you buy: open days are invaluable when it comes to deciding where to study
Howard Barlow

"The last part of the day is an informal Q&A session in small groups, so everyone gets a chance to have their questions answered."

Some institutions now offer open days online. For example, the London Institute of Banking & Finance hosts live webinars. (Its MSc in banking and finance is delivered entirely online.)

"Prospective students can ask about the course, as well as watch a 'taster' lecture," says associate dean Hema Tank. "It makes sense to have the open day online, as that's the environment in which the students are going to learn."

As postgrad students are more likely to be working or have caring responsibilities, an open day is the perfect way to find out how the university may help. Student support should be the first point of call.

"Ask about welfare provision, childcare and the process if 'x' happens," says Siân Duffin, student support team leader at Arden University, "especially when it may be an issue for you."

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The Blue Planet effect

Thanks in part to the BBC wildlife series, there has been a sea change in the popularity of marine biology courses and the study of the world's oceans. **Helena Pozniak** tests the water

When she was just 12 years old, an impressionable Cathy Lucas, now associate professor in marine biology at the University of Southampton, met Sir David Attenborough. He'd come to talk to students about his 1979 landmark wildlife series *Life on Earth*. "I thrust him my copy of his book to sign. He inspired me to go on and study zoology."

Just back from a research trip to Saudi Arabia, she's since spent years investigating what makes jellyfish tick - programme makers at the BBC's latest natural history series *Blue Planet II* sought her expertise for a segment. Although jellyfish have been around for at least 500m years, they've remained the poor relation of marine life, often misrepresented as freakish, alien blobs, says Lucas.

But recent population blooms have piqued scientists' interest. "Attention is focused on what's driving this growth in numbers - and the effect this has on the oceans." Invited to a screening of the *Blue Planet II* series, she once again heard Attenborough speak and thought: "Here I am, doing this, as my actual job."

Lucas teaches students on Southampton's marine biology degrees based at the National Oceanography Centre. Like many universities around the country, Southampton is noticing the "Blue Planet effect" on the numbers of students interested in the field. "Big series such as these are critical in raising awareness of the issues facing marine wildlife," says Lucas.

Even between the first and second series, there have been dramatic changes in the oceans, says David Duffy, a research fellow at Bangor University. "Most of these changes can be traced back to human activity, which is having a devastating impact."

Duffy is working with scientists at the Sea Turtle hospital in the University of Florida, investigating the huge rise in cases of young turtles suffering cancerous tumours. "Numbers worldwide are skyrocketing and this is almost certainly due to human activity, but we don't know exactly what activity," he says.

Drawing on techniques he developed during five years spent researching human cancers, Duffy has been analysing samples from the turtles



From battling sea anemones to turtles with cancerous tumours, options for marine research are vast
Getty

operated on: "I became convinced that the cutting-edge techniques I was using could be applied more broadly, so I embarked upon a project that brought me back to wildlife and the sea - having studied marine snails as a postgrad."

From acidification of the oceans to the aggression of hermit crabs, there's no shortage of research avenues, says Prof Mark Briffa who's taught students on Plymouth University's one-year master of research (MRes) in marine biology. As professor of animal behaviour in the School of Biological and Marine Sciences, he's currently researching how and why sea anemones fight.

"We're still seeing students coming through who were inspired by the first *Blue Planet* series," he says.

Plymouth accepts about 20 students on the year-long course, which kicks off with some taught modules to build research skills. Students then pursue individual research projects, working with university researchers or those based at the nearby Marine Biological Association. They may investigate local shores, go offshore or travel to a research facility in Ischia, Italy.

"The degree gives you a chance to dip your toe into research and see if it's for you," says Briffa. Students go on to find work with marine agencies and environmental consultancies, he says.

Briffa hopes the students also leave inspired with a sense of wonder and curiosity: "I can go to a local rocky shore and pick up a single rock and find some major divisions of life - that can't fail to fascinate anyone."

"It sparks questions of why animals live where they do and how they survived. There's a whole world down there that people simply aren't aware of."

Dive in Where to study

Plymouth University offers an MRes (master of research) in marine biology - students can follow research projects with academics from the university or the Marine Biological Association, which co-hosts the course. Marine biology is offered at postgraduate level at **Bangor University**, while the **University of Essex** offers an MSc in tropical marine biology. The **University of Stirling** offers a master's in marine biotechnology, and **Portsmouth** offers an MSc in applied aquatic biology. Postgraduates at the **University of Southampton** can study marine biology based at the National Oceanography Centre, which owns two research vessels for carrying out boat-based fieldwork. **HP**

“Most of the changes in the oceans can be traced back to human activity”