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The
Guardian

Postgraduate courses



**“There’s a lot
of fluidity in this
new tech world’**

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Postgraduate courses

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In brief

Shifting realities

StoryFutures Academy, a new national centre for immersive storytelling run by the National Film and Television School and Royal Holloway, opened in December. It brings together the worlds of film, TV and games to explore the potential of virtual, augmented and mixed reality technologies, and is planning to offer a master's programme. "Britain has an amazingly rich heritage and strength in storytelling," says Sir Lenny Henry, a supporter. "Immersive technologies are an exciting new opportunity for us."

Vital enzymes

The devastating effects of plastic have been all over the news since the 2018 Blue Planet episode that showed albatrosses feeding their chicks plastic. Thankfully, scientists from the University of Portsmouth are working on a solution: they're developing an enzyme that can eat its way through polyethylene terephthalate, a common plastic found in bottles.

Introduction Rachel Hall



Choose a postgraduate course to reboot your career prospects

Once, getting any university qualification was a chance to upskill. Employees attended night classes or studied on day-release to get the grades and get ahead. But times have changed. Given that nearly half of school-leavers in England go on to higher education, people need something more to stand out - and upskilling through a postgraduate course can help you do that, dramatically improving job prospects in your field. Equally, as many industries change rapidly and jobs that require new technical skills proliferate, going back to university is - for many - about reskilling in a new area.

In this supplement, we'll be looking at how new technologies are shaping the workforce - and how a postgraduate course can help you retrain, even if your first degree was in ancient Greek. We'll examine the fields that are changing fastest, from space science to the media and creative industries, and learn how the best postgraduate courses are continually updating themselves to keep up with industry demands. We'll also be looking at new ways to earn while you learn, either through postgraduate apprenticeships or online MBAs.

And - if this brave new world all sounds a bit overwhelming - we're delving into the important topic of looking after your mental health as a postgraduate.

The employment landscape may be changing, but exciting opportunities in new fields are emerging. Instead of starting a new degree from scratch, postgrad degrees can fast-track a career change. Now, more than ever before, if you keep an open mind, the possibilities are endless.

For many, going back to university is about reskilling. Postgrad degrees can fast track a career change'

Jobs of the future

Are you ready to join in?

If you want to reskill, a tech-related postgrad could future-proof your career

Zofia Niemtus

We are in the middle of a fourth industrial revolution. The first saw the world move from rural societies to industrial urban centres; the second introduced mass production; and the third brought the digital revolution. The fourth is changing how we integrate technology into our lives, thanks to advances such as artificial intelligence (AI), nanotechnology and robotics. But what will this mean for humans as workers?

Retraining will be an essential feature of the new employment landscape, in which many jobs will be automated. Opportunities to reskill should be offered across the "whole economy" and supported by tax relief to ensure the UK is prepared for the changes ahead, a recent Social Market Foundation report suggested.

Postgraduate study is already a popular option for those looking to move their career in a new direction. Jean-Marc Frangos, a managing director based in Silicon Valley at BT, one of the UK's largest technology employers, has observed that a growing number of people working in tech retrained after studying for unrelated first degrees.

"When I meet people here, their original education might be anything from ancient Greek to marketing," he says. "Now they work in the tech domain and they're very good. Don't assume that your original education is excluding you from a tech career."

There are a wide variety of tech careers available for people to pursue after further study, he continues, but certain areas will be in greater demand - particularly data science analytics

'Don't assume that your original education is excluding you from a tech career'

Jean-Marc Frangos
BT



ILLUSTRATION: SHAWNA X FOR THE GUARDIAN

and cybersecurity, both of which are offered at master's level at universities across the country. A recent report named data scientists and cybersecurity experts among the most "future-proof" careers.

AI, too, is a huge growth industry: a report from jobs site Indeed found that employer demand for AI-related roles has more than doubled in the US in the past three years, while the number of jobseekers looking for those roles has remained roughly the same. In 2017, the UK government recommended creating an industry-funded AI master's programme.

Caroline Jay is a senior lecturer in the school of computer sciences at the University of Manchester and teaches on the AI: Robot overlord, replacement or colleague? module. The course is available to students from all disciplines, she explains, and teaches the theory underpinning AI, as well as practical experience of programming.

"We're seeing more students from the sciences and social sciences, and even some from humanities," she says. "They're not trained in computer science as a first degree,

but they do start to do bits of programming and coding along the way and realise it gives them a huge advantage over people who can't."

Even if students don't end up working in AI, she says, the skills they develop on the course will be invaluable in an increasingly tech-driven jobs market.

"We've changed the way we think about technology," she says. "If you have people who are experts in accounting or law or medicine or fashion design and they understand how technology could help them with that, they can be the ones to drive it forward. They might not be writing the programmes, but they will be leading the problem-solving aspect of it. They can make those informed decisions that people in the professions are going to need in the future."

Nicola Webb is studying for an MSc in data science and computational intelligence at Coventry University, and is hoping to go on to research social robotics - which looks at advances such as using robots to take care of the elderly. She says the potential for development in this area is vast.

Threats and opportunities

30%

The proportion of UK jobs at risk of automation by 2030; manufacturing and retail are especially under threat

75m

The number of jobs worldwide that could be displaced by robots in the next decade

133m

The number of jobs worldwide that could be created due to technological advances in the next decade

SOURCES: PWC, WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

"We often debate whether we should be developing AI to such an intelligent level," she says. "But I think that this generation of computer and data scientists are more than aware of the dangers, through their own research, or from sci-fi movies like Ex Machina, that put such scenarios into play. There is so much that AI can do for us in the future, and we shouldn't be scared to develop it."

She recommends anyone considering postgraduate study in the field to "brush up on mathematics, especially linear algebra and matrices", as there is "much more maths involved than you think".

Frangos agrees, stating that "excellent technical credentials" will always be necessary, but that the right mindset is by far the most valuable skill to develop.

"Have a proactive attitude," he says. "It might look complicated because it looks scientific, but there's a lot of democratisation taking place. There's a lot of fluidity in this new tech world. It's not an exclusive world, and it's particularly welcoming to people who have curious and open minds."

Study in Glasgow Chic and cheerful

For cracking clubs and vegan cafes, glorious architecture and green spaces, look no futher than Glasgow

Rachel Hall

Choosing which postgrad course to study is a big decision, but where to do it is almost as important. Glasgow ticks a lot of student boxes with its vibrant cultural scene and world-class nightlife. Is it right for you?

Going out

The University of Glasgow is based in the city's bohemian West End, your first port of call for student nights out, whichever uni you're at. Byres Road is an atmospheric strip of charity shops and cute cafes such as Kember & Jones. For something stronger, Dukes Bar serves keenly priced cocktails and hosts a great open mic night. Nearby is hipster haven Finnieston: for drinks, try the chic Kelvingrove Cafe, laid back Lebowski's or the Ben Nevis for whisky, or sample Ox and Finch's creative small plates for a perfect post-exams celebration. On the city's south side, Pollokshaws is an up and coming area; highlights include Rum Shack, a raucous Caribbean cocktail joint, and Ranjit's Kitchen, an inexpensive Panjabi cafe. For a slice of traditional Glasgow, try the Old Toll.

Vegans are well-catered for across town, with sister pubs 78, Stereo, Mono and the Flying Duck all popular choices for inexpensive plant-based comfort food. There's plenty to entertain in the city centre: endearingly scuzzy Nice n Sleazy is a lively spot for late drinks, while drinks at Firewater are £1 for students on Thursdays. Glasgow has a hard-won reputation for music - Barrowlands and King Tut's have proud legacies. The clubs are, arguably, even better: regularly pulling in big-name DJs, Sub Club's atmospheric low ceilings and quality sound system make it one of the UK's

best. Drinking and dancing is hungry work, so round off the evening with a trip to the Justin Bieber-approved Blue Lagoon chippie.

Where to live

For a city its size, Glasgow is affordable: average monthly student rents are £450, but can be as low as £250. The West End and the city centre are pricey - expect to pay £100-£150 per week for a room in a flatshare - but plenty of uni students opt for more affordable residential neighbourhoods close by, such as Hillhead, Kelvinbridge and Woodlands. Merchant City, in the centre, or Dennistoun, in the cheaper East End, are well located for Strathclyde and Glasgow Caledonian students.

Some of Glasgow's universities also have dedicated postgraduate residences. The University of Glasgow has four halls, located a 15-20-minute walk from the university, priced at £119.63-£145.67 per week for a single room. Strathclyde has one hall, Andrew Ure, in which students flatshare in fours or sixes. Private options also exist: one of the newest, Dobbies Point, has a gym, terrace and barbecue area.

Highlights

Glasgow has struggled to shake off its industrial legacy, but this is a city full of beauty. Elegant designs by art nouveau architect Charles Rennie Mackintosh, arguably the city's most famous son, abound - although his most famous work, Glasgow School of Art, has been seriously damaged by fire. The influence of the world-renowned art school's graduates is palpable across town: low-key galleries and creative boutiques are everywhere - try Timorous Beasties for surreal fabrics. For a more curated artistic experience, visit the excellent Kelvingrove Art Gallery and Museum, designed by Mackintosh. Glasgow has greenery too: Kelvingrove park is nearest to town, while Pollok and Linn parks warrant the trip farther out. To sample full-on Scottish countryside, take the 30-minute drive out to Lough Lomond.



The University of Glasgow, as seen from Kelvingrove park
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



Experienced journalists are also enrolling on postgrad courses for data training
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Media reboot The real story is the rise of data

As video and data skills change the face of journalism, universities must keep pace with their postgrad offerings

Helena Pozniak

Back in the day, if your shorthand didn't stretch to 100 words a minute, your chances of landing a journalism job were sketchy. These skills are now pretty much redundant - better to know how to whip up a frenzy on social media, build an interactive graphic, or number-crunch data. And with Cisco forecasting more than 1m minutes of video shared every second by 2021, understanding images has never been so important. "Keeping up to date is a challenge for universities," says former BBC journalist Lisette Johnston, now head of school at ScreenSpace in London, sister to MetFilm School, where postgraduate numbers are rising. "But the most impressive master's programmes are those that replicate real working life - industry deadlines, working with others and so on."

However, media and news companies say they can't actually find enough candidates with the skills they want, and universities have taken to reviewing and updating postgraduate media courses annually. Queen Margaret University in Edinburgh is one of many that have launched courses

responding to industry needs for visually literate "content creators". "The media industry is evolving at an unparalleled rate," says Simon Hinde, programme director of journalism and publishing at the London College of Communication, where programmes have changed dramatically in the past five years. "Courses are fully multimedia - we publish web first, there's a much greater focus on the innovative use of social media and we've introduced data journalism." Knowing how to get to a story via data and freedom of information requests is one of the most prized skills, says Paul Bradshaw, who heads up the master's courses in data journalism and multiplatform and mobile journalism at Birmingham City University. "We struggle to meet demand from employers wanting students who can analyse data. All news organisations are expanding in this area."

But journalism students have tended to think conservatively, he says. Magazine courses were traditionally oversubscribed, while data journalism has attracted fewer applicants at popular UK universities. "Intellectually,

'You want to be the one with specialist skills that they don't want to let go after an internship'

Paul Bradshaw
Birmingham City Uni

students understand the need for these skills, but they think they will be the exception who gets to write beautiful flowing features for magazines, and never has to deal with spreadsheets."

He cites a Birmingham story about a planned rise in police patrols and stop and search after a spate of knife crime incidents. Journalists used data to determine which areas of the city were most subjected to stop and search. They then supplemented this with traditional reporting, by speaking to the communities affected, to give context.

Even experienced journalists have enrolled on postgraduate courses to sharpen data skills, he says, and they don't need a technical background. "We teach all that - analytical ways of approaching a problem or how to calculate a percentage."

Equally, expertise in social media, video and data could make the difference between simply shadowing during a work placement and being offered a job. "You need something that sets you apart," says Bradshaw. "You want to be the one with specialist skills that they don't want to let go after an internship."

Knowing how to make a story stand out amid millions of others is more important than ever, given the sheer bulk of online content. "As people scan and scroll, you now have even less time to capture their attention," says Ed Preedy, managing director at GumGum, which uses image recognition technology to reach targeted audiences. "Images are a powerful way to communicate complex things. For journalists, this technology is there to be embraced."

But judging what future media jobs might look like is an inexact science, says Hinde, who began working in newspapers in the early 1990s, before working with Yahoo! and Sky. "These types of jobs couldn't have been predicted a decade earlier." Now virtual reality, 360-degree video and other visual forms are emerging. "The key thing is to allow students to develop their own authentic voice. Nobody knows what jobs today's postgraduates will be doing in 10 years' time."

Comment Alison Wood



Postgrad courses must cultivate emotional and organisational traits too

Modern work - the reason most of us embark on the costly and challenging task of earning a higher degree - increasingly demands mindsets and skills centred on our personal attributes.

These include the so-called "soft skills": trust and self-discipline, the ability to build and sustain networks, compassion and empathy, a curiosity about and awareness of the world, and to be able to collaborate as well as compete. In this complex environment, who you are is as vital as what you do - not only in the upper edges of leadership but in every role.

In the UK, postgraduates represent almost one-quarter of the student population, which stood at 2.32 million for 2016-2017. By 2030 there will be 4.14 million students in universities worldwide - and these numbers are projected to keep on increasing.

Universities have historically taken their role in forming people very seriously: the process of education includes building habits of mind and character as well as higher-order reasoning. And universities are, in many parts of the world, places where in each generation social and democratic foundations are re-laid.

But not all postgraduate degrees currently cultivate a person's capacity for trust, purposeful leadership, or building sound connections with others. Some might promote creativity, problem solving and team work. Others immerse a person in task-orientated, stressful and competitive contexts. But few offer all of these things.

Does the ultimate postgraduate qualification, then, focus on developing emotional and organisational traits as well as cognitive skills? What if there were ways to incorporate the "who we are" bits as well as the "how we work academically" bits? What if interpersonal and high-level emotional literacy became a fundamental of assessed degree work and of our aspirations for university education? What would that help us do?

If the UK is to retain a first-rate, distinctive higher education sector in a fast-growing international field our challenge is two-fold. For starters,

we need to focus more on the whole-person building that happens within and around formal curriculums. Second, we need to formalise how we teach and learn about the complex interior landscape that students and staff draw on every day: trust, networks, professionalism, compassion, and leadership. This means altering our understanding of assessment and meaningful programme design, and having a much bigger conversation about what university is really for.

Alison Wood is academic director of Homerton Changemakers, at the University of Cambridge



Soft skills and collaboration could become part of the curriculum
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY



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Astral geeks

Why postgrads are turning to space

Practical knowledge and placements make courses a hit for engineers and scientists

Lucy Tobin

Space science might be a niche area, but it's gaining popularity with postgraduates, not least because "it pulls expertise from science, law, business and other disciplines", according to Dr Scott Walker, director of programmes for aeronautics and astronautics at the University of Southampton. He believes this "opens a number of opportunities for students".

Nevertheless, master's degrees such as Southampton's MSc in space systems engineering remain fairly rare in the UK. To find the most

innovative and specialised master's degrees, you may have to be flexible about where you study.

At the University of Leicester, there's a space exploration systems MSc that focuses on robotic and human space exploration. Students enrolling on the course get the chance to work with academic and industry experts in France and Italy, as well as in the UK, and the university believes its course "bridges the divide between systems engineering and space and planetary science". Students who don't want to complete a research project or placement can study the same taught modules and receive a postgraduate diploma rather than an MSc - and can upgrade by completing a project later on if they wish.

The Open University's MSc in space science and technology focuses on giving students the skills "to carry out scientific investigations using space-based



instrumentation", as well as learning a programming language to support space science applications. Meanwhile, UCL's one-year MSc in space science and engineering emphasises the scientific research applications of space technology. The university also offers a five-day taster option: its space systems engineering short course covers space's industrial landscape, the anatomy of a spacecraft and telecommunications applications, among other topics.

At Southampton, staff and students work with industry experts at the European Space Agency, Airbus and Rolls-Royce. Walker believes this is a vital element

to any space science course. "Prospective students considering a space systems engineering master's should look at the range and depth of the modules offered, while also considering what level of interaction they would have with industry," he says.

The university's MSc in space systems engineering is endorsed by the UK Space Agency and uses content from the professional courses its academics run for the European Space Agency and spacecraft industry.

Current student Vanessa Emeka-Okafor, 25, says she's enjoying "a very rewarding field of engineering - especially at a time where the space industry is picking up again in terms of the commercialisation of spacecraft and new innovations, from 3-D printed engines to reusable rocket stages." She adds: "The university has superb equipment, including a wind tunnel and state-of-the-art vacuum chamber - we recently used it to test the efficiency of our Hall-effect thruster. That kind of practical experience is invaluable."

Other universities offer courses that begin at undergraduate level and result in a master's qualification: Kingston runs a four-year MEng in aerospace engineering, astronautics and space technology; and Bath runs a four- or five-year physics with astrophysics combined undergraduate and master's. The optional year is a placement - possibly at Cern.

▲ On the launchpad: a space science master's could help you be part of the industry's renaissance
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Experience

'Space is as much a part of my life as my arm; I can't imagine life without it'

Overlooked as a candidate for being Brazil's first astronaut, Thais Russomano has made space-related social impact and science her life

Interview by Rachel Hall

Ever since I was four years old I wanted to be an astronaut. Growing up in the south of Brazil in the 60s, nobody took me seriously. I was raised by two very strong ladies - my mother and grandmother. I was expected to work, make money and support myself. But the idea of me wanting to be an astronaut or astrophysicist was difficult for them to understand.

Space is as much a part of my life as my arm; I can't imagine life without it. But I had to study something, so I chose medicine. When I visited an uncle in the US, a professor at John Hopkins University, he took me to the world's biggest private library. My uncle said: "Come on, you have seven floors of medicine and you're sitting there watching videos about planets and stars? You have to do something

related to space or you'll be a very frustrated woman."

He phoned Nasa, and they encouraged me to study a master's degree in aerospace medicine at Wright State University in Ohio. Although my native language is Portuguese, that was the first time in my life I felt like I was speaking my language. Everyone shared the same dream to be an astronaut - I didn't have to explain myself.

I moved to London to study for a PhD in space physiology at King's College London, then to Germany to work for its space agency. The moment to return to Brazil came when it started selecting its first astronaut. I was extremely qualified for the role, but they decided to select from within the military; it wasn't open to civilians. I wanted the selection to be open, because Brazil's military dictatorship had destroyed its space science industry.

Instead, I established a space life sciences research centre. There was no tradition in this area in Brazil. But by the time I left, in 2017, I had about 100 people working for me, including 17 people from five countries.

I wanted a new challenge, so I returned to King's, where I now work in the aerospace physiology and health department. The next step was starting my own company,



'I was extremely qualified to be Brazil's first astronaut - but they wanted someone from the military'

Thais Russomano
Innovaspace

Innovaspace, in April this year. I see it as the new capitalism - we make a profit so we can reinvest in projects, but it also has a social impact, through our outreach work.

On one programme, called Kids2Mars, astronauts from two Mars analogue missions [on which

astronauts exist in a simulated Mars-like environment] answer questions via Skype with schoolchildren from different countries.

Another is named after Valentina Tereshkova, the first Russian woman to go into space. We want to inspire young girls to study science. I was

▲ Thais Russomano, pictured outside the Rio de Janeiro planetarium
PHOTOGRAPH: FÁBIO ERDOS



Apprenticeships

Elevating managers to the next level

Level 7 apprenticeships in financial services appeal to senior staff wanting to upskill

Lucy Jolin

Back in 2015, when level 7 apprenticeships first launched, there were just 30 places on offer - and few companies had heard of them. Three years, and a further 4,500 starts later, these apprenticeships, which offer the equivalent of a master's degree while you earn, are becoming big news.

The range on offer has increased, too. The digital and technology solutions specialist apprenticeship, for example, takes in leadership skills and how to transform the workplace, as well as designing complex IT systems. It was developed with employers including Accenture and Capgemini.

Demand is high for the senior leader master's degree apprenticeship (SLMDA), with 42% of starts being female, says Ali Cox, head of apprenticeships at the Chartered Management Institute (CMI). "This apprenticeship is on an upward trajectory and universities and employers are embracing it. All the indications are that further expansion will take place in the coming years."

For higher education professionals, the academic

professional level 7 offers two potential routes: one in teaching and one in research. And you can now qualify as a solicitor on completion of the solicitor level 7 apprenticeship.

"I feel very passionate about the fact that apprenticeships are for everyone, not just 16- and 17-year-olds," says Maggie Moss, commercial partnerships manager at Solent University. "If you're upskilling your workforce, that includes your managers. You can't have a highly skilled workforce and ineffective managers - that just won't work."

So what's driving the upswing? The apprenticeship levy is a big factor. From April 2017, UK employers with an annual pay bill of more than £3m have had to spend 0.5% of it on apprenticeships - and many are choosing to spend that money on higher level apprenticeships. According to CMI research, nine in 10 managers are in favour of using the levy to fund apprenticeships for people of all ages.

And attitudes are rapidly changing, says professor Lynette Cranfield, pro-vice chancellor for education at Cranfield University. "Companies

'Apprenticeships are for everyone, not just 16- and 17-year-olds. Upskilling has to include managers'

Maggie Moss
Solent University

are now far more aware of how they can use the levy; they used to think of it as more of a tax. We've had a real breadth of sector on our higher apprenticeships - everything from airlines to food companies. And we are now seeing companies actively talent-spotting and thinking about how they can develop people."

Employers are also finding that offering higher level apprenticeships can encourage more diverse recruitment - meaning a wider range of leaders and decision-makers. At KPMG, apprentices on the accounting and taxation apprenticeships start with a level 4, and then choose if they want to progress to level 7. Graduates can also join and then choose to follow the level 7 route, so everyone will come out at the same point.

Emma Loten, 23, joined the KPMG programme at 19, following her A-levels. She started working towards her level 7 in April 2018. "I wanted to be in a professional environment, rather than at university," she says. "I'm now doing more complex work than a graduate who's been in the firm for a year, just because of all the extra experience. Once I complete the level 7, it'll open lots of doors."

Kathryn Gomme, apprenticeship lead at KPMG, says these apprenticeships offer parity of progression and opportunities. "If we are going to be the most innovative and create the best solutions for our clients, that means having a diverse school of experiences, thoughts and ideas. And having a range of entry routes is key to that. It's fantastic that we can recruit individuals in a different way, and we can attract individuals into the firm without the need to go to university."

The future is looking bright for aspiring leaders seeking to learn new skills while staying in the workforce. As Cox puts it: "Degree apprenticeships are helping to challenge snobbery around vocational routes and provide pathways through to the top."

▲ Employers have found that offering higher level apprenticeships encourages more diverse recruitment
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Experience

'When I last studied, everyone thought unfettered capitalism was the answer'

Mike Trench, 38, is commercial and financial director at Marchwood Power. He has a BSc in business administration and is studying for a senior leader master's degree apprenticeship at Solent University, Southampton

Interview by Lucy Jolin

I'm now at that point in my career when you look to the future. I want to make sure I'm in a secure position, and I can provide for my family. Jobs at my level increasingly want a master's of some kind, an MBA, or very specific experience.

My company has been very supportive in terms of further training and development. But MBAs are very expensive, and can be very time-consuming. The master's apprenticeship is perfect, because it's day release, with some work in my spare time and some in the company's time. I think it's a much easier route.

The time feels right for me to start learning again. The world has changed a lot since I last studied. I started in 1999, 10 years after the fall of communism in Europe - the period in which everyone was convinced that capitalism was the answer, and we should leave everything as unfettered as possible. So much has happened since then, including the financial crash.

What we were once taught has moved on: is growth the right answer? Is sustainable development a better option than the short-termism of growth, and satisfying profit forecast at any cost? I think opening people's eyes up to these questions has got to be a good thing, for your business and the world. I'm very much looking forward to applying what I learn to the business, day-to-day.

I've worked in both the manufacturing and car industries, and in those sectors, apprenticeships are seen as very positive things, with a long history. In other industries, they may be less familiar. But I think there's a growing realisation that apprenticeships are something to be celebrated.

▼ Tweakonomics: Theories of economics have changed, says Mike Trench
PHOTOGRAPH: SIMON J EVANS



MBAs

Soft skills, hard to beat

They don't come cheap, but the blend of business skills offered by an MBA could future-proof your career

Seb Murray

An MBA can change your life - propelling you into a well-paid executive position, helping you change careers into a new industry, or enabling you to start a budding business empire.

Take Jaelyn Anderson's example. Since enrolling on the online MBA at Warwick Business School in 2018, the mother of three has switched from an operational role to become head of strategy and founded a coffee roasting business as a side hustle - all without taking time off work or sacrificing her salary.

"The MBA has given me exposure to a range of business disciplines, pushed me out of my comfort zone, and built my resilience

and confidence," Anderson says. "Balancing my time is very hard, but using tech to collaborate with global teams remotely is more like the workplace of future."

An MBA is a general management degree focusing on business fundamentals - finance, marketing and other disciplines. Full-time UK programmes usually take a year to finish, although some are up to 21 months long. They generally attract people in their late 20s or early 30s with a minimum of three years' relevant work experience. Part-time executive MBA (EMBA) and online programmes are typically for older participants.

The content of MBA courses is regularly refreshed, to ensure its relevance in an age of rapid business change. The course at London Business School (LBS), for example, has introduced new modules on artificial intelligence (AI), digital strategy and computer programming.

But with automation poised to potentially displace some white collar jobs, it is the uniquely human "soft" skills taught on MBAs, such as leadership and creativity, that could future-proof your career. "AI



MBAs cover all aspects of business, including soft skills such as creativity and leadership

they came from many industries, including social enterprises, while some were entrepreneurs. Students work in groups to tackle real business challenges, some of which may be overseas - an experience that helps nurture a valuable network.

"It's opened lots of doors for me in the London investment community and people have given me interview tips," says Said MBA student Diana Kolar, 28, who is managing director of the Oxford Seed Fund, which invests in startups affiliated to the university. "Not earning a salary while you're studying is a downside, and the classes are super intense, but I think the investment will pay off." Despite the cost, getting on to an MBA isn't easy; it usually involves writing essays, and scoring highly on an exam and interview.

"We look for energy, enthusiasm and people who will contribute to classroom discussions," says Julie Hodges, associate dean for MBAs at Durham University Business School. "Tell us what you want out of the MBA and how you'll apply your learning in practice to give yourself a good chance of securing a place."

has some way to go before it can - if it can - replicate that," says Gareth Howells, executive director of MBAs at LBS. The best schools charge astronomical fees - at LBS the MBwA costs more than £80,000, and even the cheapest UK courses are roughly £15,000 - but salaries on graduation could be much bigger than the cost of the course. At Said Business School in Oxford, 91% of the 2016/17 MBA cohort landed a job within three months of graduation, and the average salary was £71,550.

MBAs attract plenty of consultants and bankers, but Said's students are a diverse bunch - there were 58 nationalities in 2016/17 and

'Not earning a salary is a downside, and classes are intense. But the investment will pay off, I think'

Diana Kolar
MBA student

Finance your course

Grant, scholarship and loan options

Loans for postgrad study are still a new thing, but they're neither the only nor always the best option

Seb Murray

Fresh loans to cover course fees and living costs have thrown a financial lifeline to postgraduate students. But course fees are still high: the average was £7,400 in 2018-19, up by 31% on 2014-15.

Over the past couple of years, the government has introduced financial aid for postgrads: loans of up to £10,609 for master's students, and as much as £25,000 for doctoral students. "It's a high financial bar to study a postgrad, but that bar is a little bit lower now," says Nick Hillman, director of the Higher

Education Policy Institute. "That's been good for students from lower socio-economic backgrounds."

Postgrad students under 60 living in England and most EU nationals on programmes at UK universities are eligible for these two loans. Repayments for both are set at 6% of annual income over £21,000. There's also interest: the retail price index (RPI) plus 3%.

Those with a master's and a doctoral loan make a combined repayment of 6% covering both. Students apply online or by post through Student Finance England or the equivalent body in their country.

But these loans won't necessarily cover all expenses - for living, travel, and books, for example - so students may need to turn to the private sector for extra funding. However, this can lead to enormous repayments when postgraduates start earning more - especially if they're paying off undergraduate debt simultaneously.



Consider taking a part-time job if you can find somewhere that accepts your priority is studying

PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

Martin Lewis, founder of Moneysavingexpert.com, says different financing options might suit different students. "If you're likely not to get a big salary then you will want a postgrad government loan. If you're a high earner with a good credit score, then you may find it cheaper to get a personal loan." Admiral and Sainsbury's are currently

offering personal loans of up to £15,000 with fixed annual interest rates of 2.7-2.8%, for example.

Most universities provide generous scholarships, and websites such as The Scholarship Hub are a good place to find out all about them. The University of Sheffield, for example, offers around 100 scholarships worth £10,000 apiece

to postgrad students each year, with awards based on widening participation criteria and merit - students from a low-income background or with a first-class undergraduate degree would qualify, for instance.

These are competitive, however; about 1,000 people apply for Sheffield's postgrad scholarships each year. Joe Woolway, acting head of financial support, advises getting detailed applications in early. "What we look for is someone with clear rationale for studying a postgrad and clear career aspirations," he says. University of Sheffield alumni can get 10% lopped off their tuition fees, but those receiving this discount cannot apply for a scholarship.

Local governments, charities and trusts for funds are other options. The Economic and Social Research Council provides studentships for some doctoral students worth up to £20,237, covering maintenance, research, travel and other fees. Some postgrads have even crowdfunding their tuition through websites such as Indiegogo.

Part-time work can also help you pay the postgrad bills. Mary Tear, 24, worked for the University of Sheffield as an administrator during her postgrad law degree there. "They knew my studies came first and were flexible if I needed time off when essays got overwhelming," she says. "There are plenty of ways to pay for university. You just have to get a bit creative."

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Mental health

'Expectations can feel impossible to sustain'

Fear of failure is one of many concerns for postgrad students. What's in place to safeguard their wellbeing?

Helena Pozniak

For more than a decade, post-doctoral researcher Liz Mistry found it hard to leave her bed. "I felt so lonely, some days I would pull the covers over my head and cry for hours." Creative writing helped her manage her depression and she went on to complete a master's at Leeds Trinity in 2016. She's also just published her fifth crime novel. "I was upfront to the university about my mental health. Because I'm older - 55 - I felt able to formulate my thoughts and needs."

Mistry believes that postgraduate researchers need to be able to share experiences and support each other to stay healthy. "Isolation is one of the main issues that affect students' mental wellbeing," she says. "Developing a community with good support mechanisms and access to mental health practitioners is key." Undergraduates' wellbeing has grabbed headlines, but postgraduates - researchers in particular - have been neglected. Some feel isolated, according to research published this year by Vitae and the Institute for Employment Studies (IES).

"They might suffer anxiety about whether they deserve their place at university," says Sally Wilson, who led IES's contribution to the research. "Postgraduates can feel as though they are in a vacuum. They don't know how to structure their time. Many felt they didn't get support from their supervisor." Taught students tend to fare better than researchers - they enjoy more structure and contact, says Sian Duffin, student support manager at Arden University. But she believes anxiety is on the rise. "The pressure to gain distinction grades is immense," she says. "Fear of failure can lead to perfectionism, anxiety and depression."

Younger postgraduates who've come straight from undergraduate study might suffer from burnout, particularly if they performed well in their first degree. "Expectations can feel impossible to sustain. The feeling of 'not good enough' can erode confidence and self-esteem." With more postgraduates forced to live at home, universities are losing what psychologist and author Audrey Tang calls "that campus

▲ Postgraduate study is a more solitary pursuit, and some students can feel isolated
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

'Postgraduates can feel as though they are in a vacuum. They don't know how to structure their time'

Sally Wilson
IES

feel". Staff at Brunel University, where she runs mindfulness sessions for postgraduates, try to intercept students before they hit crisis point and require help from counsellors - whose services are nearly always overbooked at many institutions.

Since the summer, 17 universities have won up to £150,000 each (totalling £1.5m) from the Office for Students to target postgraduate wellbeing. Some, such as the University of Manchester and University of Sussex, are linking with NHS services and training both staff and students. Leeds Beckett and Portsmouth are investing in initiatives to change attitudes and awareness of mental health. Derby and the University of the West of England are developing web-based resources and apps to help students connect with each other and help intervene early. "These are early projects," says Wilson. "They're trying to understand exactly what is needed - it's not one size fits all."

If students do slip through the net, it's important emergency provision doesn't depend on a single staff member, says Clare Dickens, mental health and wellbeing coordinator at the University of Wolverhampton, where the award-winning "three minutes to save a life" suicide prevention scheme is being rolled out.

Nearly 450 student union officers and staff - from caretakers to academic staff and the vice-chancellor - have been trained in how to recognise and act on early warning signs. "It's not helpful just to tell students to go and seek help," says Dickens. "If someone is in obvious emotional pain, then literally a few minutes of your time could save them. You haven't got to sit there for three hours - that's not your job. But we must respond with compassion."

In the UK, Samaritans can be contacted on 116 123 or by emailing jo@samaritans.org. You can contact the mental health charity Mind by calling 0300 123 3393, or by visiting mind.org.uk

Wellbeing: how to look after yourself

As a postgraduate, you will have many demands on your time. But if you don't stay healthy, or work too long on autopilot, you might lose attention to detail, miss opportunities and burn out personally and professionally. If the world around you is not going to slow down, says psychologist Dr Audrey Tang, who wrote *The Leader's Guide to Mindfulness*, you'll need to find a way to manage.

Looking after yourself, she says, is not unnecessary or indulgent: if you're physically, emotionally and mentally healthy, you'll perform better for yourself and others.

So how should you go about taking care of yourself?

Fresh air and time away from your work always does you good. A daily walk - maybe with a friend or family - will re-energise you.

Yoga, tai chi and other relaxation therapies can clear the mind. Just 30 minutes exercise three times a week has been proved to lift mood.

We're visual creatures. Brighten your laptop with a sunny screensaver or photos of people in places you love - this offers a mini snapshot into happy memories and can generate a sense of warmth and relaxation.

Make sure you take a proper lunch break - that means physically stepping away from where you're working.

Set "office hours" and don't engage in work-related matters after a certain time (as much as teaching requirements allow).

Break down tasks - completing achievable goals will give you a sense of satisfaction. Identify mood patterns and try to plan your day to suit these.

Go to social and wellbeing events on offer. "Attend any extra seminars, lectures and events in your field - you can build common ground. It's a boost for academic and pastoral wellbeing," says former postgraduate Philippa Bunch.

Don't be afraid to reach out and ask for help, companionship or just a chat.

If you feel lonely or anxious in new social situations, take it slowly - or try a class where you can immerse yourself in the activity, rather than focus on needing to speak to people straight away. **HP**



▲ Relaxation therapies such as tai chi lift your mood
PHOTOGRAPH: GETTY

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