



## **Healthcare Postgraduate Course Guide**

*Exploring and understanding postgraduate courses in the Healthcare industry*

*Applying for a postgraduate course to specialise in your desired profession*



**EMPLOYABILITY  
TEAM**

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Advancing Careers

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## **Introduction**

Careers in the Healthcare industry tend to be split into two areas:

- Giving care to individual patients within a healthcare setting
- Improving the health and wellbeing of people through healthcare support services

Before you explore postgraduate courses, you first need to identify if having a masters' qualification is a requirement of your future career goal. Typically, healthcare roles that involve giving direct care to an individual, require a postgraduate qualification after completion of an undergraduate degree. Roles that focus on organisation and the administration of services, to support and improve the health and wellbeing of people, welcome undergraduates from a health-related degree and a further qualification isn't a requirement.

It's important to decide which career path you want to take first, so you can explore the route into that profession in the most direct way possible, to fulfill your career aspirations.

## **Which type of course should I choose?**

Many current students wish to pursue a career in Social Work, Nursing, Midwifery and Occupational Therapy. For a career in these professions, you need to complete your undergraduate degree and then study a pre-registration postgraduate degree in order to qualify as a specialist.

When you're exploring your course options it's really important to think specifically about the setting you would like to work in and the type of individual you wish to support, before deciding on your postgraduate course.

e.g. If you're interested in a career as a Nurse, think about whether you would you want to work as an Adult Nurse, Children's Nurse, Mental Health Nurse etc.

e.g. If you wish to become a Social Worker then think about whether you're interested in Child and Family Social Worker, Criminal Justice Social Worker, Community Social Worker etc.

The reason the client and care settings are important is because there are different courses for each area of specialism, so it's important to pick the correct course for your profession.

## **What is the difference between an MA and an MSc?**

There may be slight differences in the course syllabus from university to university, but all UK postgraduate courses follow the same curriculum standards, whether you choose to study an MA or an MSc qualification.

## **Pre-registration courses**

Many MA and MSc courses are pre-registration courses, and the advantage of undertaking a pre-registration postgraduate course is that upon completion you will gain registration with the professional healthcare body for your chosen career. This means you will be registered as a professional with knowledge to practice within the guidance of that specific professional body.

The Professional Bodies for some specialist careers of interest to our students are as follows:

- Nursing/Midwifery - [Nursing and Midwifery Council](#)
- Social Worker – [Social Work England](#)
- Occupational Therapy - [Health and Care Professions Council](#)

## **Course duration, structure and entry requirements**

As you are already studying a suitable undergraduate degree within healthcare, most postgraduate courses will be two years, combining elements of a taught degree with practical work placements. Full-time study courses are usually structured as first year academic studies and the second year in a placement(s); some universities will offer part time options, which will take longer to complete.

Because Social Work, Nursing, Midwifery and Occupational Therapy are regulated professions in most countries, postgraduate courses in these subjects tend to follow a set structure, which is accredited by its governing body.

Postgraduate courses usually require an undergraduate degree, as well as demonstrable interest in the specialism. This means that you should have some experience (professional or personal).

The amount of required experience differs from institution to institution, but universities will generally require a minimum of one to six months experience. Examples of relevant experience include:

- Paid full or part time employment
- A personal background in caring/supporting an individual in need
- Volunteering work

Some course providers specifically require that you have spent time working alongside a member of the profession you aspire to train for, to ensure you have a sound understanding of the role prior to committing to the course.

Use platforms like LinkedIn or industry networking events to liaise with someone working in your desired profession; you can create an opportunity to have an informal chat with them and ask questions to find out what they do and how they got started. You may have the opportunity to ask them for work shadowing, to see what they do on a day-to-day basis and get a valuable insight into how the profession or organisation operates.

You can seek opportunities to get experience in your local hospital, doctor's surgery, day centre and nursing homes. If you like to work with children, you could volunteer in schools, summer camps, youth clubs and local sports teams. Experience of mentoring, counselling, or befriending may also be useful for social work and related careers.

Victim support organisations, homeless shelters and mental health charities provide valuable experience for those hoping to work with vulnerable groups, as well as phone line counsellor roles for charities such as ChildLine, Nightline or the Samaritans. Other relevant experience includes working in a community setting or at fitness centres in health promotion or getting involved in more wide-ranging community projects at advice centres, community centres, churches and other faith communities.

## **Additional requirements**

Most postgraduate courses in the Healthcare industry require Maths and English GCSE or the equivalent. You can research whether your existing qualifications are a suitable equivalent through a company called Ecctis (previously NARIC), who provide a service to advise on comparisons of international qualifications against UK qualification framework levels.

<https://www.ecctis.com>

If you don't have the required Maths and English GCSE, you can undertake these courses, both online and in a classroom.

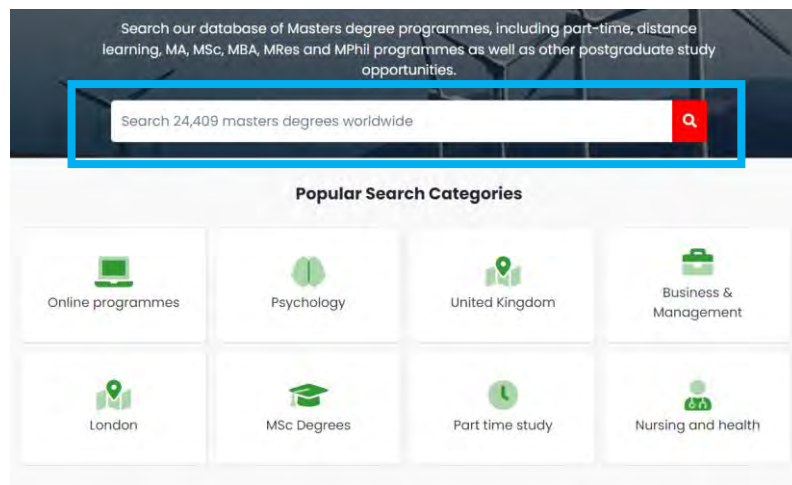
You can also explore undertaking a 'Functional Skills - Level 2' course, which is a GCSE equivalent, which you can complete as a fast-track option. Below are two websites you can use to explore the Functional Skills Level 2 courses.

<https://mmerevise.co.uk/>

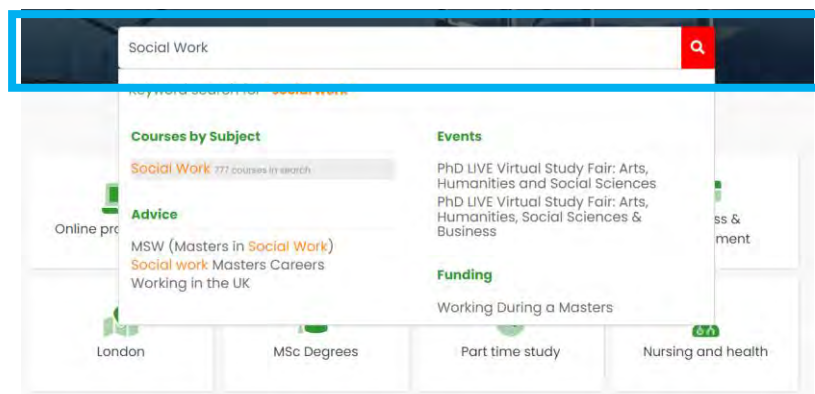
<https://www.learndirect.com/blog/functional-skills-faqs-gcse-equivalents-online>

## **How do I research courses?**

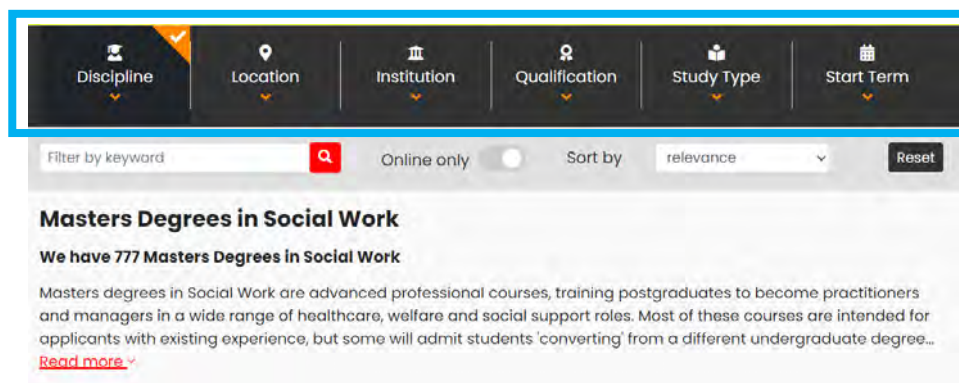
[Findamasters.com](https://www.findamasters.com) is a directory of Masters' degrees at universities all around the country and you can search this website for all postgraduate degree programmes.



Search for your course area and the database will show you all the courses in this specialism.



You can then use the filter option to match your needs – a good starting point might be to filter by the location if you're interested in courses in London.



You can also research through [UCAS Postgraduate Study](#) and [Prospects Postgraduate Study](#)

It's also a great idea to attend university open days (either online or in person) to talk to tutors and current students on the course you're interested in, to get some insight and ask any direct questions you have about the course.

## **How much does it cost?**

The costs for postgraduate degrees and undergraduate degrees are different; undergraduate degrees are subject to a tuition fee cap (currently £9,250 per year), but postgraduate degrees are not. Course fees for master's degrees differ from institution to institution and subject to subject, because the universities themselves set the tuition fees for postgraduate degrees; you should check individual universities for details of the course you wish to study.

## **Where can I find funding?**

There are many factors that affect funding; some students may receive funding based on their academic achievements, whilst other students may be eligible for support because of their personal circumstances. Individual universities may offer bursaries and scholarships, or the opportunity to apply for government bursaries if the course subjects are areas of specialism that are in high demand.

Some more information on funding is provided through the links below:

<https://www.ucas.com/postgraduate/postgraduate-fees-and-funding>

[https://www.postgrad.com/fees\\_and\\_funding/funding/postgraduate\\_student\\_funding\\_guide/](https://www.postgrad.com/fees_and_funding/funding/postgraduate_student_funding_guide/)

<https://www.thefundingclinic.org.uk/postgraduate/>

<https://www.gov.uk/funding-for-postgraduate-study>

## **When should I apply?**

Check to see if there is an official deadline for your chosen course. While some institutions set specific deadlines, many accept applications throughout the year. However, some course providers accept candidates on a first come, first served basis, and may close their application window once they've received sufficient interest.

It's always a great idea to apply at least 6 months before the course starts, to have the greatest chance of success. Even if you're still in your final year of undergraduate study and don't have a degree transcript, you should be able to provide a predicted degree grade to submit your application early.

## **How do I apply?**

It's best to apply directly to individual universities.

Many universities have their own online application system, so you don't have to complete your application in one go; you can create an account and save your progress.

Alternatively, you can contact the universities' admissions team to learn more about their specific application process.

Each university sets its own timeframes for processing applications, and they will contact you within that timeframe to confirm if you've been offered a place on the course.

## **Can I apply to more than one course?**

There are no rules against applying to more than one university for study; it is a great idea to apply for two or three courses to increase your chances of success.

Each application, personal statement and referee details should be tailored specifically to every course, to make the application as strong as possible.

## **What do I need to include in my application?**

Universities offer advice about their application process and guidelines, so make sure you look at all the required information before starting your application, to ensure you can collate your evidence accordingly.

You will also need to submit a personal statement as a part of the application. This should explain your motivations for studying the specific course, any relevant skills and experience you have (either through education or employment), as well as your future career aspirations.

Alongside this, you will also need to submit references and academic transcripts/degree certificates.

## What should I include in my personal statement?

A well-written and convincing personal statement is the key to convincing university admissions teams that you deserve a place on a postgraduate course. Admissions teams read many applications per course, so the opening paragraph of your personal statement needs to get straight to the point and make a real impact. It's your chance to sell yourself to the university to demonstrate that you're right for the course.

Your personal statement should follow a logical, methodical structure, where each paragraph follows on from the one before. Make sure paragraphs are short, succinct, clear and to the point.

Capture the reader's attention with an enthusiastic introduction covering why you want to study that course. Then, engage the reader in your middle paragraphs by summing up your academic and employment background, evidencing your knowledge and skills and demonstrating why the course is right for you.

Your conclusion should be concise. This is your opportunity to summarise why you're the ideal candidate.

Don't use the same supporting statement for every course. Admissions teams can spot copy-and-paste jobs. Generic applications demonstrate that you have little understanding of the course. In order to stand out from the crowd, your postgraduate personal statement should be unique and tailored to the course and the institution that you're applying to, so what you need to include may differ in each university depending on the course requirements. However, in general you should include the below information:

- **Highlight enthusiasm, interest, commitment and passion for the subject area and your career goal:** why are you applying for that course? Explain your motivation for wanting to train as a social worker/nurse/midwife/occupational therapist etc.
- **Your goals:** explain your career aspirations and how the course will help you achieve them. Describe how studying your chosen course fits in with your long-term ambitions and career path. Reflect on your experiences to demonstrate that you have a realistic insight into the profession and how they work to support people.
- **Evidence of your skillset:** provide evidence that you have and/or are developing relevant skills and qualities for the profession you are studying. Highlight where you have made an impact in core areas related to the course.
- **Reasons why you want to study at that institution:** why that university? Address how your undergraduate course has prepared you for a postgraduate course.

## Personal statement example

A Healthcare postgraduate course is not only applying for an academic course, but training for a particular profession, therefore it is a requirement to have undertaken work experience in a relevant care setting. Therefore, you will need to describe the experience and tasks you've undertaken and reflect on how your experience has shaped your motivation to train in that profession. You will also need to provide specific examples of how you have demonstrated the skills, qualities and professional values required for a career in that profession.



You can find an example of a personal statement for a course in Social Work below:

<https://www.prospects.ac.uk/postgraduate-study/masters-degrees/personal-statements-for-postgraduate-applications/masters-in-social-work-personal-statement>

## **Who can I ask for a reference?**

For your application you'll need to supply academic references, so you should ask lecturers or tutors who you've had contact with throughout your undergraduate degree, as they'll be able to comment on your academic performance and suitability for the course you're applying for.

Contact your referees to discuss your intentions to apply for a masters' well in advance - they may be able to offer advice for your application. Giving them notice and allowing them plenty of time allows them to prepare a strong reference in support of your application.

The prospective university may seek to verify your references, if there is any doubt as to their authenticity, while some universities have set forms for referees to complete.

Finally, don't delay your application if you're waiting for references. It's important to get your application in on time, and you can often change or add referees at a later date.

## **Employability Support**

If you need any employability support to discuss your future career options, or need support with your postgraduate application, you can book a one-to-one appointment with one of our Careers Consultants. Please drop us an email at [employability@london.aru.ac.uk](mailto:employability@london.aru.ac.uk)/[employability@london.northampton.ac.uk](mailto:employability@london.northampton.ac.uk) and we'll get you booked in as soon as possible.