

Will doing a master's get me a better job?

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Many students wrestle with the decision whether to take up Postgraduate study at the end of their Undergraduate degree. For some students this is to put off the thought of getting a 'real-job' for another year (which is a bad reason to do a Master's!), but for others it is seen as a route to further develop their education, themselves, and - ultimately - their employability.

But that invariably comes with a cost: another year of course fees, accommodation and bills, and remaining a poor student.

So how do you know if Postgraduate study is for you? Today we look at whether a Master's is for you...

Post-Graduate Study To Get a Job

One of the most commonly cited reasons that students give for pursuing Master's courses is because they feel the qualifications will boost their salary.

On first impressions, the statistics suggest that people with master's qualifications are more likely to find work than those with undergraduate degrees - and they're likely to earn a slightly higher wage. Data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (Hesa) shows 86.6% of postgraduates were working in professional positions six months after graduating, compared with 64% of first degree graduates. Sounds great, right?

A Master's is not a Magic Ticket

However, students need to remember that there isn't an explicit labour market for Master's qualifications. This means that many master's graduates

- especially those with generalist rather than vocational qualifications - will still be competing against first degree graduates for jobs.

If you're studying a technical master's - for example in a pharmaceutical or medical subject area - then it's likely that this will enhance your employability above an undergraduate. However, if you're doing a master's of a more generic nature that's not essential to the advertised job, employers will probably view you in the same way as other graduates.

What does this mean?

This would mean that those graduating with Master's degrees need to highlight to employers that recruiting someone with an additional qualification will benefit their organisation. If you've done a more general master's course that isn't required by a prospective employer then you need to show what skills you've gained - research skills, lateral thinking and so on. You should show that you're able to study something in-depth and do good critical analysis, a transferable skill in all walks of employment.

Funding Issues

Finding funding to study a Masters isn't easy and for a lot of students, a lack of funding means that continuing university study isn't an option. Some universities may have scholarship opportunities or offer discounts to students who move from undergraduate to postgraduate level.

You don't get a student loan either for Master's Study - so you need to be sure it is definitely what you want before committing to it.

How do I get the most out of my Master's Degree?

To get the most out of a Master's degree you need to have a clear goal and an idea of what you want to get out of it. If you want to get into industry, then think strategically - make sure that you're getting work experience or going on placements and that this links in with your studies. Put as much research into finding a postgrad course as you did when searching for an undergraduate course - and think about the end game.

Ultimately its important for students not to embark on a postgraduate course just because they think that it will make them more employable. You will need to explain to employers what benefits their qualification will bring, but there is no denying that - if you a clear goal and reason for study - that enhancing your skills with a postgraduate degree will enhance your employability.