



**UNIVERSITY
OF LONDON**

**CAREERS
SERVICE**

How to Market Your Masters

You have committed to Masters study – you now need to highlight the value of the skills and knowledge gained to prospective employer.

Whether you're a Career Starter, Career Developer or Career Changer, this guide is designed to help you best to spell out the value that your Masters study adds as a potential employee of their organisation.

Frequent questions

How much do employers value a master's degree?

Employers generally view postgraduate study very positively. They are interested in your reasons for undertaking further study, what skills you gained during your course and how well you can explain how the combination of your skills and experience are of value to their organisation. In other words, your career choices need to be coherent and relevant.

Career Starter

As a career starter it is important that you are clear on why you want to pursue a masters, how it relates to your career, your interests and why this elevates your skillset and value as a potential employee.

Career Developer

As a career developer you can highlight how your previous work experience combines with your master's study. This may be in the form of transferable skills blended with academic/professional accreditation.

Career Changer

As a career changer you also need to be clear on these points, but you also have the opportunity you have the opportunity to demonstrate how your ability to do your

job has been strengthened and enhanced by having both a theoretical underpinning in your approach as well as substantial real life work experience, capability, and track record.

How much detail about my master's degree shall I put in my application/CV?

As with all job applications, relevance is the key factor (see our *How to write a CV* and our *Job Applications titles*):

- start with the job description/person specification;
- identify what skills the employer requires;
- build a list of your evidence for each of those skills;
- then consider whether certain modules in your master's are particularly relevant to the job you want to apply for. For example:
 - Does the job require analysis of statistical data? If so, include units that developed your statistical skills (and name statistical software you are now familiar with).
 - Does the job require skills such as research or project management? If so, include a couple of bullet points giving evidence of those skills.
 - Is your final dissertation/project on a topic related to the area of work you are trying to get into? If so, include the title and the type and scope of the research involved.

What kind of jobs might I apply for, and at what level?

As with undergraduate degrees, many master's degrees are essentially transferable qualifications, enabling you to develop a range of skills that can be applied in many different job sectors.

Some graduate roles advertise with a minimum qualification of an undergraduate degree, but the "typical" employee recruited often has a higher-level qualification. This means you may often be applying for the same level of jobs as you would with an undergraduate degree. The advantage your master's qualification gives is that you can position yourself as a stronger candidate for those jobs, because of the enhanced skills and knowledge you have developed.

There are some roles, often research based or scientific/analytical roles, that specify the need for a discipline specific master's qualification as a minimum entry qualification.

Masters study as a minimum entry to a profession can vary between countries. It is important to research the recruitment norms of the country in which you plan to work to check on professional regulations and whether a masters qualification opens up specific immigration options.

Be specific about your skillset - Use your application/CV to show you have the particular skills and knowledge required by the role – don't assume that it will be obvious to an employer, simply by stating the title of your master's.

For example, for a scientific job highlight the specialist knowledge or relevant, specific lab techniques you have gained.

Similarly, if you have an MA in Global Media and Digital Cultures and are applying to work in a communication, highlight the content from your master's that most relates to the role.

If your master's is not obviously vocational, or you are applying to a sector for which it has less direct relevance, concentrate on emphasising the transferable skills gained. For example, in a MA in Gender, Sexuality in Global Politics, you are likely to develop skills relevant to a wide range of graduate jobs, such as:

- critical thinking
- written and oral communication
- analysis

- research expertise
- independent working

Whether you are a career starter, career developer or a career changer you increase your opportunity for success by highlighting the skills gained in your master's that are most relevant to the employer/each role that you apply to.

What about approaching employers speculatively when there is no job description/person specification?

Speculative approaches can be highly effective in many sectors, especially if you tailor your CV and a covering letter to the organisation and to the role you hope they might offer you.

You can use LinkedIn and looking at related roles at similar organisations to get a sense of what skills and experience a particular employer may require. LinkedIn, Twitter, and other social media can help you identify useful developments that may help your speculative job search. For example, have the company just won a major contract? or located to the region where you live? (*See our LinkedIn & social media and Networking leaflets*)

Researching the organization, you want to join helps you be strategic about your approach. Picture the role you think you could do there, consider what a job description/person specification would list as requirements and focus your CV and cover letter accordingly. You can also reach out via LinkedIn to fellow alumni or staff working in the organisation for insight about the company, their work culture and recruitment patterns. This is more likely to be successful than going straight in without any preliminary conversation with a request for a job. Building relationships and a network is more effective and has longer term benefits.

When should I be applying for jobs?

If you are aiming at graduate training schemes with the bigger employers you will need to submit applications early in the academic year (often September–December in the UK), so it is worth checking deadlines early. If you live in another part of the world or are planning to work in another country, it is useful to do your research on local recruitment trends and timeframes.

Even graduate schemes with no published deadlines close once the positions are filled, so applying early definitely pays off.

Smaller employers (and most graduate jobs are with smaller employers), usually have later deadlines. Individual graduate jobs tend to be advertised at the point of need, which means an employer wants to fill a role fairly quickly. You should apply for this sort of role shortly before you will be available for work (6 to 8 weeks in advance to make applications is a useful guideline) though it is useful to stay aware of the job market throughout the latter part of your studies. This helps you identify hiring trends and recruitment timeframes in your preferred industry sector and country where you plan to work.

Keep in mind that unless stated otherwise, there is often some flexibility about how soon you need to be available. It is probably best not to leave applications right to the end of your course... unless you want to take some time out.

How do I describe my previous work experience?

Many master's students have professional experience already either through full time employment or via an internship. How you present it depends on whether you are trying to progress in a similar industry or similar role, or you want to use your master's to actively help you to change direction.

If as a career starter or a career developer you are using your master's to facilitate a new career direction, it can be most effective to give prominence to your recent study and how that prepares you for the direction that you now want to take.

For instance, a short profile at the beginning of your CV can be particularly helpful in this situation - setting out:

- the background and skills you bring from your previous work or undergraduate study.
- the skills/knowledge your master's adds to that.
- the field in which you now want to apply that combination of experience, skills, and knowledge.

It may also be worth dividing the experience section of your CV into 'relevant experience' and 'additional experience' (or similar headings), so that you can group the most relevant things such as further study,

employment or volunteering together and put them nearer the beginning of your CV.

If as a career changer you have extensive work experience, you may also want to consider a skills-based CV (see *our: Advice for career changers* and our *CV leaflet*.)

Similarly, if you are a career changer and want to build on your existing career, through taking on greater leadership responsibilities, aiming for promotion to the executive suite or starting your own business you need to emphasise how advanced study has developed both your mindset and skillset. Executive roles require significantly developed "soft-skills" such as leadership, strategic thinking, organisational and commercial awareness in addition to sector specific skills and knowledge. Your emphasis should include how you have developed holistically and are able to apply critical and reflective thinking in your professional context as well as your academic studies.

In Conclusion

Undertaking a postgraduate qualification identifies you to employers as someone who has a growth mindset and a great deal of commitment to learning. This guide and associated leaflets highlighted have been developed to help you maximise this distinction in your career.

Further Resources

See your university student portal for further career information.

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