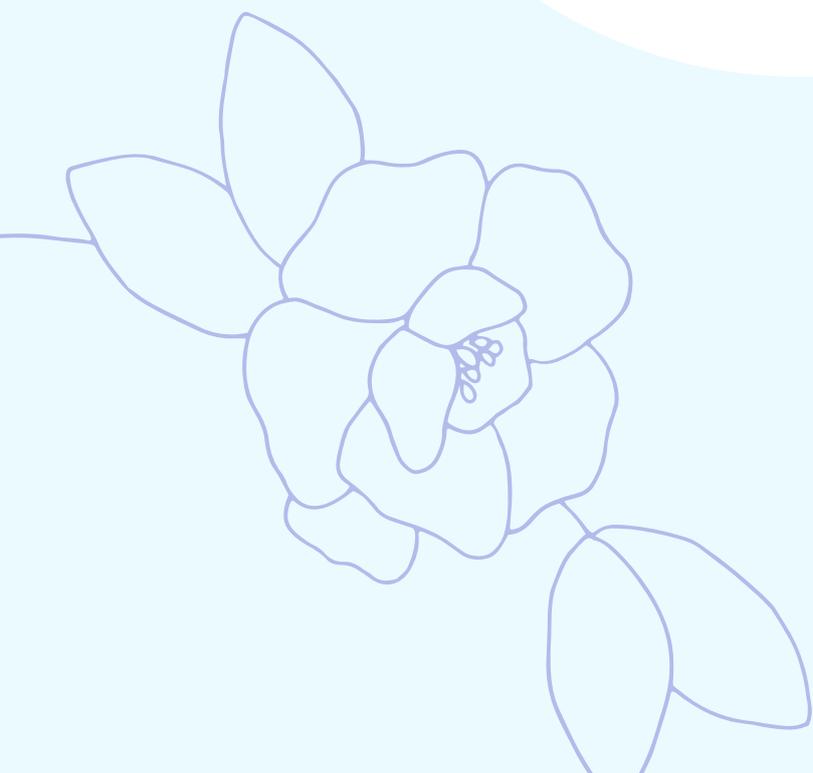


ENCOURAGING WOMEN ACROSS
ALL BORDERS

CAREER GUIDES

RESEARCHING AND PREPARING
FOR GRADUATE STUDIES



Encouraging
Women
Across All
Borders

EWAAB

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

Researching for and preparing for graduate study can be daunting, there are several things to consider and it can get very confusing. Don't worry, you aren't alone.

Using this career guide, hearing from graduates who have already been down that path, and doing your own individual research will give you the clarity and confidence you need to progress into graduate studies.

Take the information in this guide as a starting point and then don't be afraid to ask for input from mentors, professors and more senior folks in your field of interest.

Now, let's get into graduate studies!

Graduate Studies: A Short Introduction.

What are Graduate Studies?

Graduate Studies encompass any extra study you do after you complete your Bachelors degree; this ranges from Masters degrees to Dphil or Phd degrees (in the US this is a 'Doctoral degree').

Some graduate courses and institutions have certain entry requirements (such as having studied a certain subject before, or achieving a certain grade), but apart from that, you can choose to study almost anything you like!

Who can do a Graduate Degree?

Anyone who has completed a Bachelor's degree can pursue graduate studies. You can be any age (in fact some retired people chose to do graduate studies), you can also pursue studies in almost any country you like, at any university or college that offers the course you want to do.

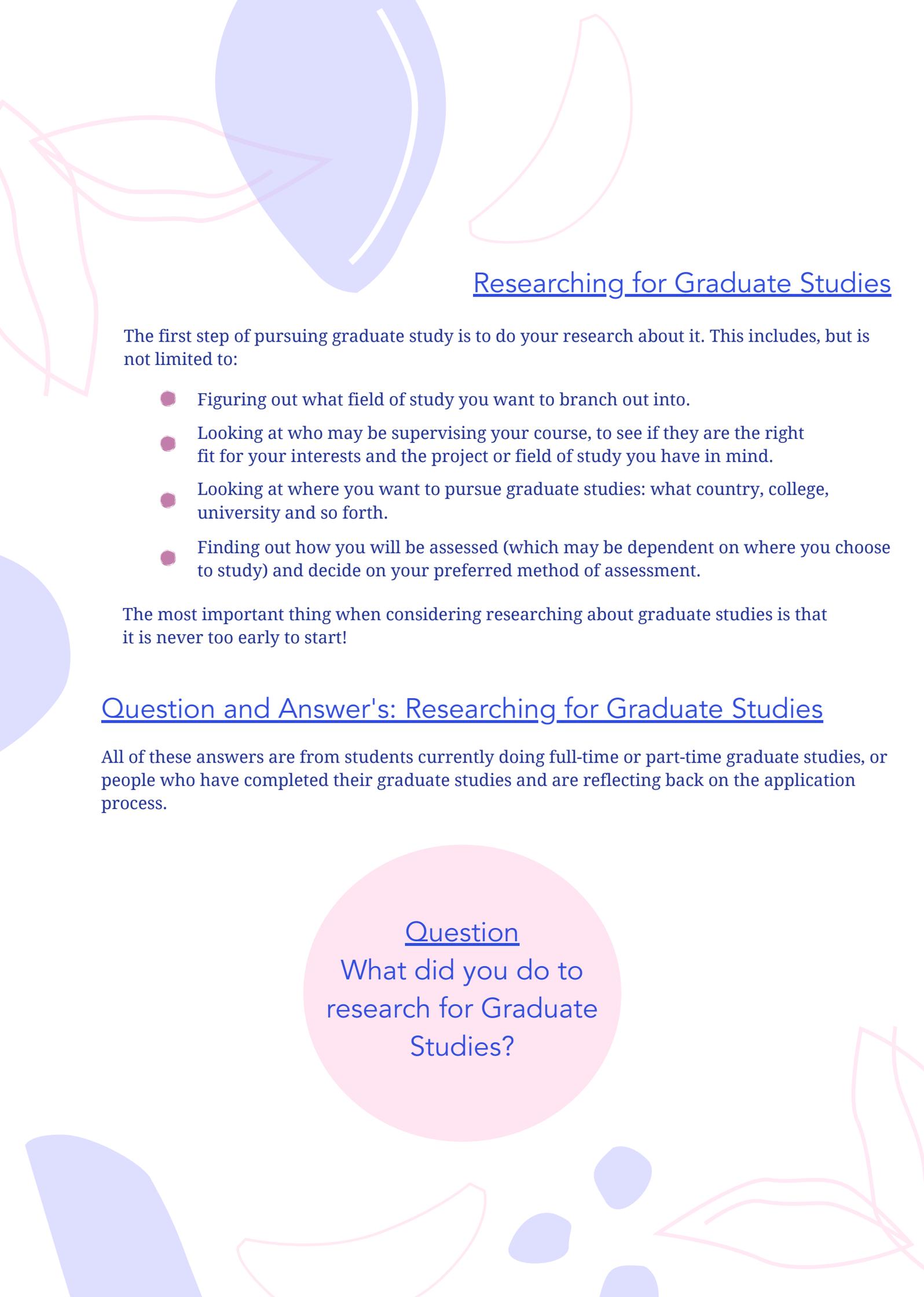
After completing your Bachelor's degree, you are free to explore the very wide world of graduate education!

Are Graduate degrees necessary?

Graduate degrees are necessary for progressing into certain fields of work and advancing within your profession; but this does not mean it is necessary for all career paths. You may even want to do one so you can study a certain topic in further detail, regardless of whether it necessary for the career you want to pursue or not.

- Having a graduate degree in fields of work that are competitive or are contributing to certain fields of knowledge; can help you progress within your career, advance onto a new career path and even gain higher salaries.
- Graduate degrees set you above others and shows that you have the working qualities that employers want i.e. being an expert in a certain field, having resilience and a hard working personality. So, not only will you stand out to employers, but the skills you learn completing a graduate degree will help you in your new career.

It is important, however, to research whether the company you want to work with requires you to have a graduate degree. Some companies invest in upskilling their employees and this involves them funding your graduate education. So, make sure you do your research as you may find yourself in this position and can save yourself a lot of money by getting a placement at the company first and then pursuing graduate studies.



Researching for Graduate Studies

The first step of pursuing graduate study is to do your research about it. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Figuring out what field of study you want to branch out into.
- Looking at who may be supervising your course, to see if they are the right fit for your interests and the project or field of study you have in mind.
- Looking at where you want to pursue graduate studies: what country, college, university and so forth.
- Finding out how you will be assessed (which may be dependent on where you choose to study) and decide on your preferred method of assessment.

The most important thing when considering researching about graduate studies is that it is never too early to start!

Question and Answer's: Researching for Graduate Studies

All of these answers are from students currently doing full-time or part-time graduate studies, or people who have completed their graduate studies and are reflecting back on the application process.

Question

What did you do to research for Graduate Studies?

Find the labs and professors you are interested in working with! This can depend on what you might want to do after the postgrad life - either in the academia or in business.



Undergraduate: Completed in the US in ecology and evolutionary biology.

Postgraduate: Zoology in the UK, in the first year of graduate studies.

For masters programmes, looking for detailed course handbooks/course guides on the specific modules of each programme and looking at the different weightage of assessments was particularly useful in helping me narrow down the programmes and figure out what I was looking for. Also looking through academic staff lists to get a general feel for what each department at each university is about. For PhD programmes, I narrowed down the search based on supervisors I wanted to work with and where I was eligible for full-funded scholarships.

Undergraduate: Completed a BA in Geography in the UK.

Postgraduate: Human Geography and environmental social science. First year of graduate studies.



Start as early as possible so you got enough time to get to know what your options are.



Undergraduate: Completed a BA in linguistics in the UK.

Postgraduate: Applied linguistics, Psycholinguistics, cognitive science in the UK. First year of Graduate studies.

Think about whether you want to do full-time or part-time postgraduate study. This may be course dependent, or be contingent on the rules of the institution you would like to study at but it is always worth considering. Remember that you do not have to go straight into a postgraduate degree. There should be no pressure to do one straight after undergraduate education.



Undergraduate: Completed a BA in Education in the UK
Postgraduate: Education in the UK for 2-3 years.

General: Choose the supervisor not the project. You do not know where the project will go, what will work and what will not, but having a supervisor who will support you makes all the difference. Check with their current students how responsive the supervisor is to emails and providing comments on your written work. Oxbridge specific: if you have a choice of college contact current students or look online to find out how much financial support is on offer for attending conferences etc. These are often poorly advertised but having access to these pots of money saves you time and stress when attending conferences.

Undergraduate: Completed a BA in physics in the UK.
Postgraduate: Imaging sciences/medical physics/biomedical imaging & engineering. 3-4 years in graduate studies.



PhD ad sites were useful to get an initial feel for what area I was interested and what was out there, but a useful tip is to also reach out to the collaborators of groups you are interested in as well to see if their group is also a good fit



Undergraduate: UK, chemical physics (University of Edinburgh (MChemPhys)
Postgraduate: Physical and Theoretical Chemistry. First year of postgraduate study.

Preparing for Graduate Studies

The next step is to prepare for graduate studies, this could be before you apply, whilst you are applying, or anytime after the application process. Again, this includes but is also not limited to:

- Reading ahead and looking at your supervisors papers to get a feel of what you may be covering throughout your studies
- Take a break from intense full-time studies to mentally reset before you start the next academic year.
- Find others who are looking to go to the same higher education institution and/or are in the same field of study as you to establish social groups before you get there.
- Once you have a placement to carry out graduate studies, get in contact with academic supervisors or any other staff (such as welfare officers) who can help you prepare to transition into your new studies. Don't be afraid to reach out!

When preparing for graduate studies, do not be afraid to reach out to fellow students and your new supervisors. Remember, pre-reading is a great way to help your transition into new work.

Question and Answer's: Preparing for Graduate Studies

Again, all of these answers are from students currently doing full-time or part-time graduate studies, or people who have completed their graduate studies and are reflecting back on the application process.

Question

What did you do to prepare for Graduate Studies?

Research experience is very valuable for testing if you are a right fit for the academic path, a.k.a. DPhil or PhD. Often your research experience is more prioritized than your grades. You still need decent grades, but actively seek out for independent projects and field lab opportunities.



Undergraduate: Completed in the US in ecology and evolutionary biology.

Postgraduate: Zoology in the UK, in the first year of graduate studies.

Read your supervisors papers and try get a good understanding of the field before you start, it will make starting your literature review easier if you already know some scope, but also most importantly please use the time leading up to starting a PhD to take a break or a holiday or anything relaxing because you will wish you had!

Undergraduate: UK, chemical physics (University of Edinburgh MChemPhys)

Postgraduate:

Physical and Theoretical Chemistry. First year of postgraduate study.



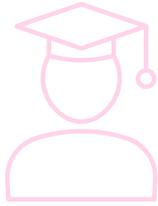
Have a proper summer break if you're going into a programme right after your undergraduate degree. You'll want to make sure you're as rested as possible before starting.



Undergraduate: Completed a BA in Geography in the UK.

Postgraduate: Human Geography and environmental social science. First year of graduate studies.

It is always very helpful to discuss your thoughts and concerns with your peers or your academic supervisors.



Undergraduate: Completed a BA in linguistics in the UK.
Postgraduate: Applied linguistics, Psycholinguistics, cognitive science in the UK. First year of Graduate studies.

Take the time to build a good social group. Research can feel lonely and it is important to have people around you who understand and can support you.

Undergraduate: Completed a BA in physics in the UK.
Postgraduate:
Imaging sciences/medical physics/biomedical imaging & engineering. 3-4 years in graduate studies.



Make sure that the topic is something that you are passionate about! Reading about the topic beforehand will help you get a feel for how the project will go, and make it easier for you to transition from undergraduate study to postgraduate study.



Undergraduate: Completed a BA in Education in the UK
Postgraduate: Education in the UK for 2-3 years.

Final Conclusions and some General Advice

Researching for Graduate Studies

Researching about who your supervisors, professors and mentors will be is just as important as researching about the project/course itself. Look at the facilities available to see if they suit the project you have in mind and remember to consider how you will be assessed as this differs between universities/colleges and courses. Don't forget to consider funding and scholarship opportunities available to you to ease any financial stress!

Preparing for Graduate Studies

Start thinking about what independent projects you want to carry out and do some research around that area. Speak to current (or future) academic supervisors or mentors for help- don't be afraid to reach out to them! Find other students who will be attending the same higher education institution as you, and who are studying the same field as you so you can have a good social group before you start your new studies. Also, have a break over summer and give your mind a bit of a rest!

Further Advice



Undergraduate: UK, chemical physics (University of Edinburgh MChemPhys)

Postgraduate: Physical and Theoretical Chemistry.
First year of postgraduate study.

Make a detailed (date, speaker etc) spreadsheet of all the extra courses and research development training you attend so it is easy to remember when you do your transfer of status.

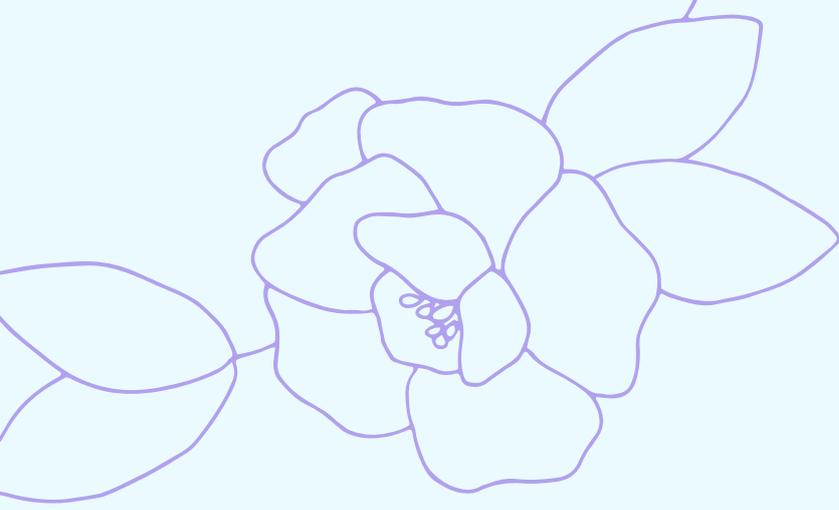
I think it is normal to not know what to do but don't let that block your way forward.
As long as you are trying it would be fine!

Undergraduate: Completed a BA in linguistics in the UK.
Postgraduate: Applied linguistics, Psycholinguistics, cognitive science in the UK. First year of Graduate studies.



Undergraduate: Completed in the US in ecology and evolutionary biology.
Postgraduate: Zoology in the UK, in the first year of graduate studies.

Trust in yourself! I can guarantee you are underestimating yourself to some degree when applying or considering to apply to grad schools. Just write that email. Reach out. Push yourself to get a bit braver than your usual self. Good luck! :)



One Last note from the Author!

Hopefully, you have now learnt about researching and preparing for graduate studies.

Use this career guide as a starting point to help you navigate the exciting world of graduate studies and don't be afraid to get straight into research.

As you have heard from the graduate students on the previous page; you have to trust yourself, each and every one of you is capable of successfully applying to, and getting a place at graduate schools. Don't doubt yourselves!

Just by reading through and taking in the information from this guide, you have shown yourselves that you are willing to go the extra mile to make you application the best it can possibly be.

