

With very little in the way of funding, postgrads have to explore all options when it comes to financing their study. **NED POTTER**, whose first degree was Philosophy and English at the University of York, explains how he covered the costs of an MA in Music.



HOW DID YOU FUND yours?



I decided to take up a postgraduate course partly because I didn't yet know what I wanted to do with my life, but mainly because I really wanted the opportunity to explore the area of study I'd chosen. I chose Music because I'm a musician anyway, and I'd written an 'elective' essay on the Philosophy of Music during my BA, which really opened my eyes to how much interesting stuff there was to write about. I chose to focus on Contemporary Studies because it allowed me the most flexibility to write about the subjects of my choosing.

FLEXIBLE WORKING

I went straight into the MA, via six weeks of a soul-destroying telemarketing job to raise some cash. I didn't even apply for AHRC funding because the process of applying seemed to cause everyone else agony. My parents kindly paid the course fees and I chose to study part time over two years, which is slightly cheaper than studying full time. I also took a flexible part-time job in a consumer research agency, mainly doing telephone interviewing.

Usually I worked for four hours each day, although this increased or decreased according to what was going on with my MA. A flexible employer is a must for a good work/study balance. During key essay-deadline times I took a week or two off work and lived off my credit card. I wouldn't recommend this though, as I'm still in debt now, but sometimes the only way to get something done well is to devote a concentrated period of time to it.

Doing the MA part time was frustrating in that I wanted to concentrate on study and not go

to work every afternoon, but it suited me to study over two years instead of one. It allows your ideas to form more fully, and just having the first deadline further away makes the whole experience less stressful and more enjoyable.

My Masters taught me proper research techniques - really useful transferable skills regarding the finding and assessing of information. It also taught me how much better you work when you're studying what you want to study, and how enjoyable research can actually be.

Once I'd completed my Masters I spent a year working part time as a Research Assistant for various members of staff at York. I also did some unpaid work experience in the Careers Service. I struggled financially while I looked around for a job that would lead onto better things, and the process was extremely frustrating. There are loads of really boring jobs out there, and the few that relate to the Arts are extremely competitive.

GET SOME EXPERIENCE

I am now working for the University of Leeds in the Library as a Customer Service Assistant.

It is a low-paid role, but surprisingly busy and with loads of opportunities for useful training, which makes it a good springboard for other Higher Education job opportunities.

I would advise everybody to get some work experience either before or during their postgraduate study. Don't make any assumptions that you'll get a job as soon as you've finished. As impressive as a further degree looks on your CV, there's no substitute for being able to show a potential employer evidence that you can perform in the role they're offering.

Postgraduate study in the Arts and Humanities rarely leads to increased earnings - few jobs are available only to those with an MA. It takes a long time for an MA to 'earn' you back what you spent on it. Having said that, doing the MA was by far the most rewarding part of my entire education, and I don't regret completing it for a second. Postgraduate study is very enjoyable and useful in the long term, but don't expect to benefit financially in the short term in most cases.