



FOR PROFESSIONALS
SINCE 1941

GUIDELINES FOR STUDENTS APPLYING FOR POST-GRADUATE STUDIES

14 October 2015: During the final quarter of the year, tertiary students will be faced with the decision of whether or not to proceed with post-graduate studies. This is according to Rama Govenden, Executive: HR at PPS, who says that although post-graduate studies give students the prospect of one day entering the employment world with additional skills and understanding, they need to know exactly what it is that they hope to get out of the qualification.

“With the increasingly competitive job market young graduates are faced with in South Africa, a post-graduate qualification could be the one thing that sets a student apart from other candidates.”

Govenden advises that it is important for students to ask themselves the following key questions before embarking on post-graduate studies;

What course do I want to study and for what reason?

Many students choose to further their studies because they are looking for an academic challenge while others are aiming to increase their knowledge, develop research skills or to gain a qualification that could further their career. Whatever the reason for embarking on post-graduate studies, it is important for any student looking to complete their honours, masters or even doctorate qualifications to choose the right course for their chosen career.

While many post-graduate qualifications and courses are linked to specific careers, such as the medical profession, in other professions a post-graduate qualification could lead to increased employment opportunities. It is advisable to speak to others who have already completed the course to ascertain whether they would recommend it.

Will the course recognise me as a professional?

When furthering studies in an effort to be a qualified professional in a specific field, it is vital to check with industry bodies whether the course is recognised by the professional body. If the course is not qualified, the student is at risk of completing a qualification that cannot advance their career.

Am I committed enough to do a post-graduate degree?

While it is very encouraging when students do decide to further their studies, it is imperative to realise that these programmes demand a lot of discipline, motivation and dedication. When a student commits to post-graduate studies, they need to ensure that they are fully capable of meeting the deadline and managing their time sufficiently to complete the programme. Most of these programmes are very fast-paced and in many instances the students are required to undergo a year, or even two years, of focussed research.

What type of course will suit my life?

It is equally important for students to consider the style of course that will suit their daily life, and possible work schedule, best. There are different options when it comes to course styles, such as lecture-based or distance learning, each with a different assessment method (coursework versus exams) to choose from.

Therefore, students are advised to ensure that they choose the most suitable course style for their personal circumstances. Some might even opt to study part-time or do an extended course if they choose to keep a full-time or part-time job while completing their post-graduate studies.

How will my studies be funded?

While more students should be encouraged to further their studies to post-graduate level, the costs of the programmes are generally substantial. Students should speak to prospective employers, public enterprises or big corporates in an effort to source bursaries or funding for their studies.

Govenden says that most companies offering bursaries normally allow the student to pay the funds back in the form of time spent working for the company. Upon completion of their studies, the student will be obliged to work for the company for a set period of time to repay the company for financially supporting their studies.

“A post-graduate degree can be a very important stepping stone to entering the job market as it portrays a positive message to possible recruiters. More people should consider taking their studies a level further by gaining additional knowledge and research experience in their chosen field of work in an effort to achieve their career goals,” concludes Govenden.