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# Notes on applying for Master's courses for entry in 2014\*

\*Mainly about applying to UK  
universities

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# What's involved

- Choosing courses/universities
  - Writing a Personal Statement
  - Getting references
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# Choosing

- **My advice is**, apply for the subject you are most interested in at the best institution that will take you.
  - Entry requirements vary across universities and within universities across courses, so check that you're being realistic.
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## Which course/university ?

- Get advice from your lecturers and other local academics. Look online.
  - This information is free and easy to collect—you should not need to pay an intermediary to get this information.
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## ‘Good’ institutions—where they are

- There are many international comparisons of universities—see

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College\\_and\\_university\\_rankings](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/College_and_university_rankings)

I do not know what these rankings are for.

- UK newspapers produce rankings of universities—see

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rankings\\_of\\_universities\\_in\\_the\\_United\\_Kingdom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rankings_of_universities_in_the_United_Kingdom)

These rankings are to help 18 year olds decide where to go for their first degree.

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## ‘Good’ departments

- The Economic and Social Research Council is a major funder of research in the UK.
- It has a list of departments it judges good and a map of where they are

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding-and-guidance/postgraduates/prospective-students/where-can-i-study/index.aspx>

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## 'Good' research

In the UK the research performance of universities is reviewed every 5 years.

- The review used to be called the RAE but is now called the REF.
- The most recent review is RAE 2008:  
for the list of subjects see

<http://www.rae.ac.uk/results/selectUOA.aspx>

results for Economics & Econometrics see

<http://www.rae.ac.uk/results/qualityProfile.aspx?id=34&type=uo>

for Accounting & Finance

<http://www.rae.ac.uk/results/qualityProfile.aspx?id=35&type=uo>

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# Looking at courses online: examples

- Southampton Finance & Economics

[http://www.southampton.ac.uk/economics/postgraduate/taught\\_courses/msc\\_finance\\_and\\_economics.page?#entry](http://www.southampton.ac.uk/economics/postgraduate/taught_courses/msc_finance_and_economics.page?#entry)

- LSE Finance

[http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/graduate/taughtProgrammes2014/MScFinance\\_%28fulltime%29.aspx](http://www.lse.ac.uk/study/graduate/taughtProgrammes2014/MScFinance_%28fulltime%29.aspx)

- Warwick Finance & Economics

- <http://www.wbs.ac.uk/courses/postgraduate/finance-and-economics/>





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# How many courses to apply for

- If you buy 2 lottery tickets you double your chance of winning.
  - If you apply for 2 courses, you double the cost but you **do not** double the chance of being accepted.
  - In the selection process academic achievement/promise counts for almost everything with only a small random element.
  - Making lots of applications wastes money and time.
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# PS interpretation 1

Under **Personal Statement** the *Southampton* form says

- Please give details of any other relevant information, e.g. publications, prizes, awards etc.

A short **list** is enough!

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## PS interpretation 2

- For some institutions the PS is your account of why you want to study the subject there.
  - Your account should be short, well-focussed and written in good English. The PS is the **only** piece of your work the uni sees and you want to make a good impression.
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# References

- Most universities ask for 2 academic references.
  - The core of the reference is an assessment of your academic ability based on your marks.
  - Make sure that your referee knows about any **special considerations** (e.g. illness) that have affected your exam results.
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# Choosing referees

- The **ideal** referee knows that you are good from personal experience but all lecturers have access to your academic record.
- **Natural choices:** a lecturer who has taught you, your dissertation supervisor and your personal tutor.
- For 2+2 students it is probably best to ask Southampton academics—they have the most up to date information and study in Southampton better approximates study elsewhere in the UK.

Academics expect to act as referees **but** it is always polite to ask them before giving their names.

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# The process

- When you apply online you give your referees' contact details including email address.
- The University will email your referees.
- The referee writes the reference and uploads it on to the University's applications website. (There is no printed paper reference.)
- Be patient with your referees—they may have a lot to do.
- You can usually track the process of your application

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# Timetable—applying

- Apply when you need to: universities have different deadlines but there is no point in waiting.
  - You may want to apply for additional courses when you know your 1<sup>st</sup> semester exam results—specially if they are much better or worse than expected.
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## Timetable—the outcome

- If you are successful, you will receive a conditional offer: the university will take you for the specified course provided your degree is of a certain class.
  - When your degree class is known in June, the university will take you if you meet the condition.
  - *Sometimes* you will be accepted if you have just missed the target.
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# Summary

- In choosing a course/university get advice.
  - Entry requirements vary, so check that you're being realistic.
  - Success depends on **your** academic performance.
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