

Postgraduate studies with the future in mind

By [Carla Enslin](#), issued by [Vega School](#)

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Considering postgraduate studies? To invest time, energy, finances, perhaps putting a promising career on hold, and asking for sacrifices from your close relations - all this must surely add up to considerable reward, or why bother? Small wonder we involve our full circle, our family, friends, lecturers, industry professionals and mentors. These conversations can be invaluable - apart from the support you may get, the questions about your reasons for wanting to further yourself will challenge you. But the clarity and insights that you gain can be of great help to distinguish between productive and potentially counterproductive reasons for pursuing a specific programme. Consider two of the most compelling reasons to pursue postgraduate studies, as well as red-flagging the merits or demerits of their counter-arguments:



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Reason #1: passion and engagement

Postgraduate studies allow you to delve deeper and gather more in-depth knowledge within the field. Advanced study develops the required mental agility to synthesise information, to produce compelling arguments, and to analyse and conceive meaningful solutions to challenges. Deep engagement is both fruitful and rewarding, but only if your interest, and perhaps even passion, is genuine. Without this approach to the field, the work is inevitably laborious, tedious and demotivating.

Enrol for the postgraduate programme of your choice when you have no doubts that you are genuinely compelled by the complexities and challenges of the field and its relation to the world around you. You may find you naturally incline to the themes and issues of relevance to your field whenever and wherever they appear. It may be current affairs, news about industry projects or even the plot of a TV series. The ideal postgraduate programme should then enable you to involve yourself in your field of choice to the fullest extent while honing your abilities and skills. It should also expose you to unique opportunities to apply advanced thinking to practice, to work on real-life briefs and projects, and ideally participate in transdisciplinary teams.

Reason #2: the network

Do not disregard the value of connections. Lifelong networks comprising of your peers, expert lecturers and industry thought leaders are a major feature of postgraduate programmes. This benefit is particularly true for programmes where the faculty or academic staff are active in, and highly regarded for their involvement in industry. Even more so when they navigate outside academia on behalf of their students. Programmes that provide direct contact and open conversations help students to build meaningful relationships with industry practitioners, thought leaders and of course the alumni. A postgraduate programme designed with the future in mind will undoubtedly build a network of collaborators who will continue to soundboard and work together on projects, even and especially as personal goals and careers evolve.

These two motivations are interdependent in many ways. Posited as a counterargument, why would anyone pursue postgraduate studies in a field you may be lukewarm about, or engage with individuals with little or no common interests? Embarking on this venture would then be a waste of intellect, energy and resources – not only of yourself, but also those of peers, specialist tutors and just about anyone else involved. Here we have the crux of the matter: what sets further education apart? It involves so much more than merely a perceived advance to a job or promotion. Rather, it is a lifelong pursuit of personal growth, developing and strengthening collaborative relationships - and achieving collective changemaking. You should invest yourself in postgraduate studies because the field is of significance to you, and if your contribution matters to you.

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