

Rachel Agius

Tell us a little about yourself:

My name is Rachel Agius and I am currently in my final year as a higher specialist trainee in diabetes and endocrinology at Mater Dei Teaching Hospital Malta. I started my training in diabetes and endocrinology in 2010 and after sitting for and passing the Speciality Certificate Exam in diabetes and endocrinology (organised by the Royal College of Physicians)

Why did you choose to study this course?

I realised I wanted to deepen my knowledge further in this field with the hope of maybe starting to do some research as well. However, since my experience with research was very limited and also because I wanted something that would expose me through all the different pathologies in endocrinology and diabetes and not just focus on one area of research only, I decided that a Master's Degree would be ideal for me. Luckily enough after a simple google search I found exactly what I was looking for when I stumbled on the MSc programme offered by Queen Mary University.

How did you find the learning experience?

This programme provided not just the opportunity to do research but also a taught course whereby it would lead you through all the different endocrine systems of the body thus enabling me to further my knowledge in this area.

What were the highlights?

Looking back I am very grateful for the taught part of the course since it also entailed a module on basic sciences and statistics (something which I was always rusty in) as well as tips on how to do literature searches as well as use of medical databases making me more confident in appraising scientific literature and writing articles and reviews. Another highlight was that this programme lasts only 2 years making me less disheartened that it would take me years to achieve the degree. Of course, fitting in all this into 2 years is no easy feat.

What do you think you have gained from completing the course? How has it influenced your work or practice?

The course is quite intense requiring you to be very involved throughout all the modules as there is a lot of material to be covered per week including extra reading which you will be expected to do in order to enhance your knowledge and write up the assignments which are part of the programme. This is more so demanding especially if you are in full time work and working night shifts. However, I must say that the hard work during each module pays off when you receive a good mark and feedback in your assignments after every module which keeps you focused for the next module. I must also say that the lectures are delivered by very enthusiastic members which make you enjoy reading up further on the topics. Also, what I found to be especially helpful were the online tutorials where we would have a chance to discuss cases with our tutors as well as bring up any queries and share them with each other –that way we got to know each other more and it helped me know where I stand next to my colleagues. I am currently preparing for the dissertation part of the course and I am sure I want to continue doing more research in this field.

What advice would you give to a student considering this course?

I think this course is suitable for anyone wanting to specialise in diabetes and endocrinology since it will give you a good foundation on which to build up and enhance your knowledge.