

Programme Specification: MSc in Oncology and Palliative Care Year 2003-2004

1 Awarding Institution

University of Newcastle upon Tyne

2 Teaching Institution

As above

3 Final Award

This programme can result in 5 possible exit awards depending on the modules selected for study:

Postgraduate Certificate in Cancer Studies (60 credits)

Postgraduate Diploma in Oncology (120 credits)

Postgraduate Diploma in Palliative Care (120 credits)

MSc in Oncology (180credits)

MSc in Palliative Care (180 credits)

4 Programme title

MSc in Oncology and Palliative Care

5 Programme Accredited by:
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University of Newcastle upon Tyne

6 UCAS Code

Postgraduate programme.

7 QAA Subject Benchmarking Group(s)

QAA distance learning guidelines

<http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/dlg/contents.htm>

8 Date of production/revision

May 2004

9	Programme Aims:
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The aim of the programme is to facilitate the development of practitioners who are prepared to offer clinical leadership, clinical excellence, and cultivate interdisciplinary collaboration in the delivery of evidence based oncology/palliative care. To introduce the basis of research in oncology/palliative care and to prepare participants for further active research within their own discipline

On completion of the MSc programme participants will be able to:

- Assume responsibility for facilitating practice development within their respective discipline and workplace.
- Advance practice via reflective practice and utilisation of research findings.
- Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of cancer, its management and the relief of symptoms associated with treatment and disease progression.
- Competently and sensitively disseminate new knowledge acquired to colleagues, patients and families.
- Contribute to the development and evaluation of local cancer/palliative care services.
- Draw upon relevant theories and research to constructively challenge existing practices.
- Actively promote seamless interagency and multi-professional care.
- Design and conduct a research project as part of the final dissertation.

10(a)	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes:
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A Knowledge and understanding

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B Subject-specific/professional skills

1

2

3

4

C Cognitive skills

1

2	
3	
4	
D	Key (transferable) skills
1	
2	
3	
4	

10(b)	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes:	Teaching and Learning Methods and Strategies
A	Knowledge and understanding	
1		
2		
3		
4		
B	Subject-specific/professional skills	
1		
2		
3		
4		
C	Cognitive skills	
1		
2		
3		

4	
D	Key (transferable) skills
1	
2	
3	
4	

10(c)	Programme Intended Learning Outcomes:	Assessment Strategy and Methods
A	Knowledge and understanding	
1		
2		
3		
4		
B	Subject-specific/professional skills	
1		
2		
3		
4		
C	Cognitive skills	
1		
2		
3		
4		
D	Key (transferable) skills	

1
2
3
4

11 Programme Curriculum, Structure, and Features:				
	Units of Study		Credits	Learning outcomes
				Progression Requirements
	Com	Core	Opt	
Stage 1				
Module A				
Module B				
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Stage 2				
Module A				
Module B				
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Stage 3				
Module A				
Module B				
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12 Criteria for Admission:

GCSEs required: Not appropriate

A-Level Subjects and Grades: Not appropriate

Alternative entry qualifications: Entrance requirements include: a first degree in a relevant health-related degree e.g. BSc Radiotherapy, BSc Nursing, MBBS/MBChB, BSc Cancer Care, BSc Palliative Care, post basic diploma in clinical pharmacy

Admissions policy

Application is made by completing a web-based form from the programme website. Before application students are directed to read the programme handbook and specification (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/cancereducationonline/Registration/reg1.htm>)

Students are required:

- to complete an on-line assessment of their IT skills
- to select a workplace mentor and obtain their signature on a mentor declaration form
- send 2 passport size photographs
- send a completed IT assessment print out
- send a £100 deposit
- two referee letters
- a completed application form

Arrangements for non-standard entrants

Students can apply for accreditation for prior learning (APL), for which a supplementary fee is payable (£100). Applicants that do not have evidence of recent learning are requested to provide a reflective article outlining what educational activity they have undertaken in the last years and how it relates to their workplace or current post.

Some students do not meet all criteria for an offer on the programme. For these few individuals, they are allowed to study a single module for CPD purposes. If their performance and assessment outcomes are adequate and satisfactory, they are able to apply for more modules to constitute the certificate exit. Upon successful completion of the certificate, these same students can apply to complete the MSc programme.

Any Additional Requirements

Access to a computer, internet connection, and printer are requirements for this course.

13 Support for Students and their Learning:

Induction

Each August there is an induction day to which all students are invited. The nature of this course is such that students choose this style of learning to match their personal circumstances, including geographical reasons. Therefore only approximately 50% of the students that register will attend the induction day and they tend to be from the surrounding region. Overseas students are not expected to attend.

During the sessions, digital photographs are taken and a virtual induction is available via the course website for those students that could not attend. A transcript of the discussions and group activities during the day are also provided. The training sessions undertaken during the induction are available via Blackboard and students are encouraged to complete these after the induction day.

International students are not expected to attend the induction day if resident outside of the UK. Feedback from overseas students is that they enjoy seeing photographs of the day and reading comments about the activities. Copies of all presentations are made available via Blackboard.

A module for training in the use of Blackboard is constantly available to all students. A community module is also available for social interaction between the students and is accessible by all students, including those currently deferring.

Study skills support

Training in the use of Blackboard is provided as part of the induction day. Subsequent to this, use of the system is encouraged by the design of the learning materials covered during the first semester. More complex tasks that require more developed skills are introduced as the course progresses. Evaluation to date indicates that the students are quickly able to use the learning system effectively and that although continued training is available, it is seldom required due to the intuitive nature of the managed learning environment in use by the University.

Academic support

All students registered on a module have contact details for the relevant module leader(s). Support is available by e-mail directly to the student. Telephone contact is also possible but used to cover complex problems. Most module leaders also maintain vigilance over the discussion boards as difficulties are often raised during a discussion board activity. Evaluation of the course has also indicated that when problems are raised as part of the discussion board, other students often reply to the problem in addition to the module leader. In this way the community of students support each other, with guided facilitation from the module leader.

Additional support is available from the programme administrator and the degree programme director.

The medical library staff are also available to support the needs of the students and have been a valuable support to module leaders and students.

Pastoral support

Students are strongly encouraged to select a workplace mentor that is familiar with their work environment and that has experience in the field of study. This provides a personal contact for the student, in addition to e-mail support from the module leader.

Support for Special Needs

There are no specific facilities for students with special needs. Module development has been with the intention of complying with the web accessibility initiative guidelines. The method of delivery of this course would be of advantage to a student with certain difficulties, such as mobility problems. Students can contribute actively to the course, without leaving their own homes or place of work.

Learning resources

Where possible all learning resources that are required for activities within each module are provided and distributed via Blackboard. Learning activities are designed with specific reference to resources that are available in an electronic format. Assistance from library staff within the University has been vital to ensure this accessibility. Where a specific resource could not be made available in an electronic format, alternative arrangements for distribution were made, or the activity was redesigned to use an alternative resource that could be delivered electronically.

14 Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning:

Module reviews

Each module runs for 15 weeks followed by a week for assessments. All students are requested to complete an evaluation exercise for the modules that they have been studying. This information is tabled and discussed at the curriculum committee and each module leader is required to produce a response to the comments and feedback and to indicate an action plan to incorporate this feedback and improvements.

Students also raise issues during the running of the module and the module leaders are able to make modifications as the module is running. Any alterations to the module are publicised via the announcements section so that students are fully aware of any implications. An example of a real time modification is where a specific activity is to use material elsewhere on the Internet. Occasionally information resources are removed or modified such that the article referenced is no longer available. The module leader can often source an alternative resource and highlight this alteration to the students. The Internet is a dynamic place and this form of vigilance is required. In fact the students are keen to provide feedback about resources that change and work with the module leader to maintain these standards.

All module leaders have access to each others modules and are encouraged to browse the materials in order to gain insight into alternative methods and techniques of delivery. With a broad range of subject topics that require often quite different approaches, this method of review has been beneficial to module leaders to consider how to improve their own materials.

We have also developed a number of tools to provide a structured review of a module and which can identify areas of weaknesses in the instructional design of the learning resources.

Programme reviews

This programme has not been submitted for programme review as the modules are still in development.

External examiner reports

External examiners have contributed to the evolution of this course by providing feedback and commentary about the nature of the material, styles of activities and robustness of the assessment procedures. Overall their comments have been extremely supportive and recognise the unique and innovative approaches taken in the delivery of this programme.

Accreditation reports

Student evaluations

Student evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester. Individual students are also advised to contact the Programme Administrator or Degree Programme Director or their module leader. Evaluation of this facility indicates that the students are fully aware of the methods for contact and would do so if required.

Feedback Mechanisms

After considering the student evaluation at the end of the academic year, an action plan is devised and posted to a discussion board for all module leaders to comment. After review by the module leaders, the same document is posted to a discussion board for comments by the students. We have also used this process when considering alterations to the course or modules and the students are keen to provide comments on these proposals and do approve of this process.

Faculty and University Review Mechanisms

Review of the educational, financial and management issues relating to this course are reviewed at curriculum meetings which occur 3 times per year, at management committee meetings (monthly) and at programme meetings (weekly).

Annual review of the programme is now in place from 2004.

Pass Marks

The pass mark for each assessment of submitted work is 50%. A candidate who fails the assessment for a module may re-present her/himself for assessment on one further occasion only, which is normally the next available occasion of examination. Further attempts require that the candidate re-registers for the module. There is no limit to the number of times that a module can be attempted, but the validity of the academic credits is normally restricted by a maximum period of 5 years and the availability of the modules.

A candidate who has failed an assessment may be required by the Degree Programme Director to produce evidence of further study as prescribed by the examiners or Board of Studies before presenting her/himself for reassessment.

Candidates who fail to obtain a pass mark on a research project will be required to resubmit the work and to achieve the pass mark. Candidates may resubmit dissertations on one occasion only, normally within 12 months of the original date of submission.

Course Requirements

A candidate shall be admitted as a part-time student and shall pursue a programme of part-time study comprising modules to a value of 180 credits, studied over a minimum period of 31 months and maximum of 5 years.

A candidate shall normally study modules to a value of 120 credits and a research project to a value of 60 credits. Each module has credits rated at 10 points except ONC809 which has 30 points. Full details of all modules shall be provided in the Degree Programme Handbook.

Code	Credits	Descriptive title
ONC800	10	Cancer Cell, Molecular Biology and Genetics
ONC801	10	Cancer Pharmacology
ONC802	10	Cancer Pathology
ONC803	10	Research Methods (1)
ONC804	10	Developments in Diagnostic Imaging in Oncology
ONC805	10	Palliative Care Themes and Perspectives
ONC806	10	Management of Cancer - Psychosocial Issues
ONC807	10	Research (2) Statistics
ONC808	10	Ethical Dimensions of Cancer/Palliative Care
ONC809	30	Multiprofessional Management of Cancer
ONC810	10	Handling loss, grief and bereavement
ONC813	10	Practice Development
ONC814	60	Dissertation

A student may exit the programme prior to the award of the degree with either a Postgraduate Certificate in Clinical Oncology or Palliative Care having gained 60 credits; or a Postgraduate Diploma in Clinical Oncology or Palliative Care having gained 120 credits. Students exiting the programme at any stage will be provided with verification of academic credits gained.

Weighting of Stages

There are no specific weightings as this is a modular course. There are different numbers of credits for some modules, which are outlined above.

Common Marking Scheme

Each module will be assessed in a manner appropriate to its content and intended learning outcomes, as agreed by the Board of Studies. The following assessment methods may be used: written examinations; assignments; case studies; in-course assessment, formative feedback. The research module will be assessed on the generation of a research proposal and the research project will be assessed on the basis of a dissertation and examination.

Each module that has submitted work has a predefined marking grid that is also used to provide feedback to the students. An example of this document is provided with this document.

Role of the External Examiner

The external examiners review the assessment procedures. A checklist for their usage was created and is included with the supplemental documentation. There are also forms for the student assessment record and for recording the details of the moderation meeting. All completed forms are made available to the external examiners for review.

The procedure for marking summative assessments is included in the supplemental documentation.

The external examiners have access to all material, all scripts, assessment records, the feedback provided to each student, a moderation report and a checklist of suggested points for quality assurance. The externals will review the spread of marks and choose specific work to review and possibly third mark. Therefore the external examiners will be able to validate the marking schemes and the validity of the second marker and moderation.

The external examiners will review the nature of the assessments, the difficulty of selection style questions (MCQs) used in the summative setting and comment on any issues that they consider might affect the quality of the course delivery or the validity, reliability or objective nature of the assessments.

16 Indicators of Quality and Standards:
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Professional Accreditation Reports

Not applicable

Internal Review Reports

A SWOT analysis of the project is included with the support documentation.

Previous QAA Reports

Not applicable

This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and of the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve if she/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities provided. The accuracy of the information contained is reviewed by the University and may be checked by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education.

In addition, information relating to the course is provided in:

The University Prospectus

The Departmental Prospectus

The University and Degree Programme Regulations

The Degree Programme Handbook

QAA Subject Review Report

Supplemental Documentation provided with this programme specification:

- SWOT analysis of the project June 2004
- Check list for external examiners
- Marking notes for module leaders
- Marking procedure for assignments
- Moderation meeting report form with example content
- Programme regulations
- Summative feedback form for submitted work
- Original support document for the course proposal
- Procedures developed for the delivery of this programme (separate directory)