

PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION

1	Awarding Institution	Newcastle University
2	Teaching Institution	Newcastle University
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 (180 credits) MSc in Palliative Care (180 credits)
4	Programme Title	Oncology/Palliative Care/Cancer Studies
5	UCAS/Programme Code	5006; 5007; 3395; 3396; 3031
6	Programme Accreditation	University of Newcastle upon Tyne
7	QAA Subject Benchmark(s)	QAA distance learning guidelines http://www.qaa.ac.uk/public/dlg/contents.htm
8	FHEQ Level	Masters
9	Date written/revised	July 2007

10 Programme Aims

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.

11 Learning Outcomes

The programme provides opportunities for students to develop and demonstrate knowledge and understanding, qualities, skills and other attributes in the following areas. The programme outcomes have references to the benchmark statements for Oncology and Palliative Care.

Knowledge and Understanding

On completing the programme students should:

A1 Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of cancer, its management and the relief of symptoms associated with treatment and disease progression.

A2 Contribute to the development and evaluation of local cancer/palliative care services.

A3 Be aware of and understand the current developments in cancer/palliative care.

A4 Demonstrate an advanced knowledge of the principles and techniques of research in cancer/palliative care.

A5 Understand the theoretical basis of cancer research.

Teaching and Learning Methods

All modules are taught web-based via the managed learning environment, Blackboard. This incorporates web-based resources, discussion boards and e-mail support from module leaders.

Assessment Strategy

Students are assessed throughout the programme in a variety of ways including practical work, exercises, electronically submitted assignments, and multiple choice questions (MCQs). They are also required to build up a 'Portfolio of Evidence' for their Continuing Professional Development.

Intellectual Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

B1 Draw upon relevant theories and research to constructively challenge existing practices.

B2 Advance practice via reflective practice and utilisation of research findings.

B3 Plan, conduct and report a programme of original research.

B4 Design and conduct a research project as part of the final dissertation.

Teaching and Learning Methods

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Assessment Strategy

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Practical Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

C1 Develop qualitative research skills

Teaching and Learning Methods

A work based research study is planned and carried out by students completing the MSc programme.

Assessment Strategy

To obtain the masters level the student is required to complete and submit a 20,000 word dissertation. Examination of the dissertation is by an experienced specialist working in the oncology field, and by a general scientist who will represent the opinion of a general reader drawn from a wider audience. (Although technically an examination script, the dissertation should represent a finished, stand alone piece of work which could be presented to a sponsor/employer as evidence of the level of achievement the student has attained).

Transferable/Key Skills

On completing the programme students should be able to:

D1 Competently and sensitively disseminate new knowledge acquired to colleagues, patients and families.

D2 Assume responsibility for facilitating practice development within their respective discipline and workplace.

D3 Actively promote seamless interagency and multi-professional care.

Teaching and Learning Methods

All modules are taught web-based via the managed learning environment, Blackboard. This incorporates web-based resources, discussion boards and e-mail support from module leaders.

Assessment Strategy

Students are assessed throughout the programme in a variety of ways including practical work, exercises, electronically submitted assignments, and multiple choice questions (MCQs). They are also required to build up a 'Portfolio of Evidence' for their Continuing Professional Development.

12 Programme Curriculum, Structure and Features**Basic structure of the programme**

This programme is a part time, on-line course which has two pathways: Oncology and Palliative Care.

All modules are delivered on-line using the web-based software Blackboard. Blackboard uses web-based resources, discussion boards and the e-mail support of module leaders. In addition, administrative, technical and library support is provided. Students are required to appoint a mentor at their workplace. The role of the mentor is to provide work-based support during the programme and sign off each semester's work. The two MSc pathways of Oncology or Palliative Care comprise of 180 credits. Alternatively students can work towards a Postgraduate Diploma in either Oncology or Palliative Care (120 credits) or a Postgraduate Certificate in Cancer Studies (60 credits). Stand alone modules can also be studied these allow a student can pick and choose single modules to study which are relevant to their line of work. The programme is modularised so the student can choose which modules are most relevant to their circumstances. Students are allowed to take 1 – 3 modules per semester. There is a choice from 7 modules in semester 1 and 7 modules in semester 2 each module gives 10 credits apart from the Multiprofessional Management of Cancer which is split into two modules of 10 and 20 credits each. The dissertation module which is required to complete the MSc programme can be studied in either semester and gives 60 credits. Each semester lasts 15 weeks with a 10 credit module being equivalent to 100 hours of notional study time.

Key features of the programme (including what makes the programme distinctive)

This programme is the only web-based MSc programme in oncology and palliative care to be offered in the world. In addition it is the sole postgraduate web-based degree programme offered by Newcastle University Medical School.

Programme regulations (link to on-line version)

<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/regulations/>

13 Criteria for admission*Entry qualifications*

Entrance requirements include: an undergraduate 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, SHOs and Registrars training for part one of the FRCR examination or in medical oncology.

Admissions policy/selection tools

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/cancereducationweb-based/registration>)

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
- Two referee letters
- Personal Statement of why the student wishes to take part in the programme
- Students who do not speak English as their first language need to send evidence of competent English speaking
- a completed application form

Non-standard Entry Requirements

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 or diploma exit. Upon successful completion of the these awards, the same students can apply to complete the MSc programme.

Additional Requirements

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

Level of English Language capability

All new students whose first language is not English are required to take an English Language Proficiency Test or provide an ILET's certificate with 7.0 or higher score for reading, writing and speaking.

14 Support for Student Learning

Induction

An induction website is available to all new students once they have fully registered. As part of the induction website - there is a module for training in the use of Blackboard and this 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. It is essential that new students complete the induction training before starting their modules.

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 co-ordinator, programme support officer, programme secretary and the degree programme directors. 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 students with disabilities

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.

15 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 semester 1 and semester 2 review meetings 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 or programme support officer 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

The Board of Studies conducts an Annual Monitoring and Review of the degree programme and reports to Faculty Teaching and Learning Committee.

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.

Student evaluations

Student evaluations are conducted at the end of each semester via an on-line evaluation questionnaire. Individual students are also advised to contact the Programme Administrator, Degree Programme Director or their module leader with specific problems. Evaluation of this facility indicates that the students are fully aware of the methods for contact and would do so if required.

Mechanisms for gaining student feedback

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.

Accreditation reports

Additional mechanisms

Extra

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, also 3 times per year.

16 Regulation of assessment

Pass mark

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. 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 ONC8009¹ which has 30 points. Full details of all modules shall be provided in the Degree Programme Handbook.

¹ This module is being split into 20 credit and a 10 credit module

Code	Credits	Descriptive title
ONC8000	10	Cancer Cell, Molecular Biology and Genetics
ONC8001	10	Cancer Pharmacology
ONC8002	10	Cancer Pathology
ONC8003	10	Research Methods (1)
ONC8004	10	Developments in Diagnostic Imaging in Oncology
ONC8005	10	Palliative Care Themes and Perspectives
ONC8006	10	Management of Cancer - Psychosocial Issues
ONC8007	10	Research Methods (2) Statistics
ONC8008	10	Ethical Dimensions of Cancer/Palliative Care
ONC8009	30	Multiprofessional Management of Cancer ²
ONC8010	10	Handling loss, grief and bereavement
ONC8012	10	Managing Pain
ONC8013	10	Practice Development
ONC8016	10	Interprofessional Palliative Care
ONC8014	60	Dissertation

A student may exit the programme prior to the award of the MSc with either a Postgraduate Certificate in Cancer Studies having gained 60 credits; or a Postgraduate Diploma in 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.

² This module is being split into 20 credit and a 10 credit module

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

The University Prospectus (see <http://www.ncl.ac.uk/postgraduate/>)
 The Departmental Prospectus
 The University and Degree Programme Regulations see
<http://www.ncl.ac.uk/calendar/university.regs/>
 The Degree Programme Handbook
 QAA Subject Review Report

Supplemental Documentation provided with this programme specification:

- Check list for external examiners
- Marking procedure for assignments
- Moderation meeting report form with example content
- Programme regulations
- Summative feedback form for submitted work

Please note. 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.

Annex

Mapping of Intended Learning Outcomes onto Curriculum/Modules

Module	MSc Oncology	MSc Palliative Care	Intended Learning Outcomes			
			A	B	C	D
ONC8000			1 3 4	1		1
ONC8001			1 3 4	2		2
ONC8002			1			
ONC8003			4 5	3 4	1	1
ONC8004	Compulsory		1 2 3	1 2		1
ONC8005		Compulsory	2	1 2		1 2 3
ONC8006			1 2 3 4	2		1 2 3
ONC8007			2 4 5	1 2 3 4	1	1
ONC8008			2			1 2 3
ONC8009	Compulsory		1 2 3 4	1 2	1	1 2 3
ONC8010		Compulsory	2 3			1 2
ONC8012		Compulsory	1 2 3 4	1 2		1 2 3
ONC8013			2 3	1 2		1 2 3
ONC8014	Compulsory	Compulsory	1 4 5	1 2 3 4	1	1 2 3
ONC8016		Compulsory	1 2 3 4	1		1 2 3

Certificate in Cancer Studies any modules apart from ONC8014 can be studied to total 60 credits.

Postgraduate Diploma Oncology same as MSc Oncology above minus ONC8014.

Postgraduate Diploma Palliative Care same as MSc Palliative Care above minus ONC8014.