

## **Frequently asked Questions from the MPH / M Res residential Manchester 18 – 19<sup>th</sup> September 2008**

In this session students worked in small groups and stated a) their aims and aspirations for the course, b) concerns and then c) straight forward questions. We have collected the information from the flip charts. In some cases they require little further comment, however we have put 'answers' or words of encouragement alongside some of the concerns.

### **a) Aims and Aspirations**

To improve our academic skills  
To question things in different ways  
To improve the health of people  
To think about things and work differently  
Learning from different contexts, and from each other  
Learn new directions and gain new insights  
I want to study biomedical research methods.  
The course is important for my career progression  
I want to gain a broader insight into Public health  
To develop skills in evidence based practice to support own existing work  
To increase the job opportunities open to me  
To pass Member faculty of Public Health Exams / registration  
To increase management and leadership skills

### **b) Concerns**

#### ***How do I find out about the assignment and reading list for each module?***

All assignment outlines and course books (if there is one) are in the 'Course unit outlines' on the main MPH website. A full reading list for each unit is only available once you have selected the unit and have access to it. All reading is labelled either 'required' or 'additional'. The former you must read in order to get the best out of the course. It is suggested that you read a selection of the additional reading. But you should remember that you will only gain the highest marks for an assignment if you read beyond the recommended text books and articles

#### ***Do some units combine or gel better together?***

This is an interesting question as you should remember that any answer will only be good for a particular individual with their own interests and skills. Our units tend to be 'more theoretical' or 'more skills based' or 'numeric'. Some students may find a numeric unit like Biostatistics quite straight forward but are more challenged by the reading and new language of a more 'theoretical' unit like Primary Health care or Health Promotion theory and Methods. So some students find that working on two contrasting units at one time can help.

We hope that the flexibility of the course enables you to select units that both suit your learning needs and your learning style.

#### ***Does the intensity of the course increase with the duration?***

This is another interesting question and the answer is no, not for the taught units. When you take your final unit you might be sharing a discussion board with a student taking their very first unit. But your work will change during your dissertation. This is a

totally different way of learning and working, one that most students find challenging but at the same time very satisfying.

### ***What if my job changes and gets even bigger? (and I cannot cope!)***

Firstly try not to overload yourself with work. Students tell us that they take about 10 hours a week per unit. If you start off by taking two units a semester and struggle to cope, then perhaps consider reducing the number of units you are taking at one time. You should read the relevant sections of the handbook on extensions and interruptions. These are prime rally used in cases of student or family illness or accident, not because of competing work and academic deadlines. If you do start to struggle do contact someone on the MPH team for advice.

### ***How will I cope with 'academicness'?***

We do not expect you to have all the answers when you start the course. However during your time on the MPH / M Res we hope to teach you two main things a) new information, ideas and skills relating to public health and primary care and b) how to read, write, study and think at a masters level. Both are challenging. The course units will be guiding you in both areas, especially the assignments. But do also explore some of the excellent study skills areas provided through Blackboard or other part of the university.

### ***Statistics!!?***

Biostatistics is one of the core units for all masters or diploma level courses on our programme. Our course has been developed over a number of years to be a straightforward introduction to the subject. It is very very practical, taking students step by step through new tests and ways of working. In our experience students who fail the unit usually do so because they do not keep up with the course work or fail to submit an assignment.

### **c) Straight forward questions**

#### ***Are the discussion boards live?***

Virtually all the discussion boards on the MPH / M Res are 'asynchronous' which means not live. You can read and contribute to discussions at any time. But most course leaders emphasised that students should try to keep up to date with the discussion boards i.e. participate in discussions or undertake activities in the 'week' it was set. Occasionally a tutor or dissertation supervisor may suggest a 'live' discussion, but this will only be after discussion with students.

#### ***How do units run?***

If you are taking four units in semester 1 (fulltime), they all start together and all run simultaneously for 10 topics. If you only take one unit, you take it in the same way over ten topics.

#### ***Blackboard! I'm still worried.***

Whether you have attended the residential or taken part in an online Blackboard induction, you should have enough skills to get started. Then just use it and get familiar with it. You cannot break it! The University has a well qualified and helpful e-

learning team, so if you do get stuck send an e-mail and someone will get back to you as soon as possible.

***How do I find out if I need to take one unit before another?***

In the course unit outlines at the top of each page there is a section where we say whether a unit has a 'pre-requisite'.

***What about library access?***

See the presentation given by Steve McIndoe the Faculty librarian, also on this web page

***How much scope is there for work involvement in assignments and dissertations?***

Quite a lot, though it varies from unit to unit. For example in Health promotion units and action research you may be asked to develop a specific assignment around a project or intervention that you are familiar with. Leadership and teams is all about applying what you learn to your work environment. In relation to dissertations I suggest you go to the Dissertation skills unit and look at some of the sample dissertations and see how students have developed research questions around topics they are interested in.

***What are the Dissertation Models?***

In the Dissertation handbook found on the main MPH website. All students registered for a MPH or M Res should also automatically have access to Dissertation skills, a zero credit unit, which has more details about the dissertation.

***How flexible can I be about adding and dropping units once the year has started?***

On a modular unit, the number of units you sign up for at the beginning of the year, determines your fees for that year. So while it is possible to drop units if your circumstances change, we do not encourage it. It is easier to change one unit for another. However we do not allow students to change to a new unit more than two weeks after the beginning of a new semester, as it is difficult to catch up.