

BDA DMEG Scoping Survey
MSc Advanced Dietetic Practice in Diabetes

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In Spring 2011, the DMEG Committee submitted an electronic survey via a web based host in order to ascertain current demand in an M Level module in Advanced Dietetic Practice in Diabetes. This information was to obtain current evidence that there was indeed a demand for the course and to support the business case put forward by interested Higher Education Institutes.

The survey web link was advertised through Link Up and the DMEG website and achieved a 40% response rate from 150 DMEG members.

Overall membership interest

There was a majority interest (58 %) in studying for a post-graduate M Level course in Advanced Diabetes Dietetic Practice. The main reasons for 28 members not to consider this option was due to already having a postgraduate qualification (M Level or above) (58%), reaching retirement age (14%) or identifying time as a barrier to further study (14%). Thirty five members expressed uncertainty of whether they could take up this opportunity. Interestingly, it was not due to lack of demand but rather funding concerns that was most restrictive of uptake, reflective of the current economic climate in the NHS. Having not approached local authority funding sources it was difficult for those stating finances as an issue to determine if this would be a definite or potential barrier.

Level, duration and structure of postgraduate study

Sixty five (65%) percent of those who were interested in the course wished to study at Masters level over three years, with 20% preferring a 2 year part-time post-graduate diploma and 15% opting for a one year post-graduate certificate. Seventy three percent of these dietitians wished to take up this opportunity within the next two years and 24% within three to four years. Therefore, the current demand for the development and delivery of a specific dietetic diabetes course is currently very high.

An overwhelming majority (96%) wished to study the course over three to six years part-time, in order to realistically manage the extra study around work and family life.

APEL (Assessment of Prior Experiential Learning)

The ability to acknowledge previous programmes of study and transfer credits obtained was desirable for 63% of the dietitians interested in this M Level course. The 37% who did not express an interest for this option cited previous M Level qualifications as a reason, or questioned whether the time lapse or area of study would allow for this process. This latter group accounted for approximately 20% of those who answered “no” to question five, and therefore would increase those wishing for the option of APEL to 83%.

Choice of modules

Specific module titles were developed and an interest was expressed in all, the option was given to “vote” for all those that were desirable to the respondent. The "Specialist Dietetics in Type 1 diabetes" module proved the most popular with 84% of respondents expressing an interest. “Physical activity, exercise and the elite athlete” was second most popular (63%), with “Life events and their impact on diabetes” gaining 58% interest. Specialist Dietetics in Type 2 diabetes was next desirable with 52% interest, and the least popular was “Working with people in different settings” receiving only 16% interest. This reflects the current demand in specific dietetic modules that are not available in any of the Diabetes Post-graduate Programmes available today and indicates an order in which they should be developed.

The results of this survey have been put forward to prospective Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) in a report with further supportive evidence from the National Workforce Survey for Dietitians which was undertaken by NHS Diabetes and Diabetes UK in 2010/2011. The DMEG Committee will update the DMEG membership of further developments through the usual channels (Link Up, the DMEG website and at study days/meetings). We thank those of you that completed the survey and encourage more of you to participate in the future.