

Dear prospective applicant,

A proposal for a postgrad course on physical activity (PA) as a therapy for non-communicable diseases is currently being evaluated. **At the back of this information letter, a two-question survey is being forwarded for your attention in order to assess whether the idea sounds appealing or not.**

Proposed award

M.Sc in Therapeutic Physical Activity (TPA), with postgrad certificate (PgC) and postgrad diploma (PgD) exit routes

Proposed specialisation titles¹

Holders of PgC, TPA can claim the title of: **‘Clinical exercise prescriber’**.

Holders of PgD, TPA can claim the titles of: **‘Advanced exercise prescriber’** or **‘Clinical and public health exercise prescriber’**.

Holders of M.Sc, TPA can claim the title of: **‘Physical activity - health specialist’**.

Are you sure you know why physical activity is so important?

Everyone is aware that physical inactivity is a major health concern but, do you know that through the right type of exercise you can prevent or treat at least 35 chronic conditions? In 2007 the American College of Sports Medicine officially declared an important statement: ‘Exercise is medicine’. Moreover, health-enhancing physical activity (HEPA) is important in today’s world not only in view of improving health and wellbeing but also for its economic values. For example, a lifestyle intervention involving 150 minutes of weekly PA was scientifically shown to be significantly more effective than the administration of metformin.

Possibilities of further career development in exercise prescription

Exercise prescription, that is, being qualified to professionally recommend the right type of exercise for health does not stop on a one-to-one basis. Do you think you are qualified to: (a) conduct research on PA interventions, and (b) develop, implement and evaluate community or population programmes involving PA strategies? Unfortunately, many wide-scale programmes that are implemented undergo no evaluation to determine how they have worked or what their effects may be. Have you ever imagined the possibility of attending a tertiary course which would be designed to: (a) give you the ability to design a project for the generation of new knowledge and be able to publish it internationally, or (b) train you on how to evaluate wide-scale interventions and how to apply strategies to sustain their continuities?

A glimpse of the proposed programme of studies

Intended for:

The programme of studies is aimed at a wide and diverse cohort of students wishing to pursue any careers in HEPA sectors mainly: exercise prescription; health promotion (policies and practice); general health and fitness industry; and to further their studies (e.g. PhD). It can also serve as an

¹ In order to professionally recommend exercise for health, you may need to be registered in the appropriate regulatory board and be in possession of a warrant to operate with the respective titles.

adjunct to enrich one's knowledge of his / her established profession or career. Examples include: medical practitioners; pharmacists; nurses; physiotherapists; nutritionists; public health specialists; sport medicine specialists; sport psychologists; teachers of physical education.

Duration:

Three years part-time leading to an M.Sc in PA as an effective therapy, with postgrad certificate and postgrad diploma exit routes after the first and second years respectively.

Mode of delivery:

Seventy per cent will be delivered online and the rest of the thought units will be offered on a once weekly two-hour evening basis starting at 18.00hrs.

Admission criteria:

You should provide evidence of higher educational qualification(s) - normally, a degree related to health and / or PA / sport.

Mode of assessment:

Units will be assessed through the submission of coursework. These will vary from short assessments to long essays. If you would like to progress at Masters' level, a traditional dissertation or paper in the format for journal publication and a final presentation (in the form of slides or poster) of your research findings will have to be undertaken.

Round-up

Unlike other under- and postgrad courses which only cover a fraction from the whole science of HEPA, this comprehensive programme of studies would lead to a specialization specifically on TPA. For careers in promotion, prescription and research of PA, the proposed programme of studies is a must.

Important notice

All the above information is subject to change and would eventually have to be approved by the Programme Validation Committee of the University of Malta. Needless to say, your feedback in the next two questions is extremely important.

Yours in health & exercise,

Charles Micallef B.Pharm (Hons), M.Sc PAPH (Staff)

20th August 2017

Here are the two questions:

1. In view of the above information, would you be interested in applying for this particular postgrad course leading to a specialisation in physical activity with respect to health, that is, a qualification that gives you the right to prescribe exercise for health, even at population levels?

Yes or No:

2. What would you change from or suggest to what is being proposed?

Please state your name & surname:

Your current job / profession:

Please save your changes and forward your reply to Charles Micallef on: miccha@onvol.net

Your cooperation is greatly appreciated.