

Article: M.Sc. in Public Health under the Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme (TESS)

The Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme helped to support my two-year post-graduate studies in Public Health. This Masters degree offered by the University of Malta helped to expand my knowledge and expertise in the field of public health and learn new skills that will be fundamental in my future career. Being a part-time course allowed me to continue working as a full-time doctor with the Ministry for Health. Although these two years have been very busy and challenging, my experience with the UOM Department of Public Health has been very positive. The first four semesters consisted of lectures and exams that covered a broad range of topics including communicable and non-communicable diseases, research methods, environmental health, medical statistics, social policy, health promotion and health economics, amongst others. The practical projects were an opportunity to put what I had learnt into practice.

The fifth semester solely focused on a dissertation project which I had started earlier on in the course. My research topic was on childhood obesity and the support for policies to address obesity. Childhood obesity is a major public health concern in Malta, with Malta having one of the highest prevalence rates of childhood overweight and obesity among European countries. Childhood obesity often tracks into adulthood and can have physical, psychosocial and social health effects on the individual. The local obesogenic environment is likely to be driving this obesity epidemic, hence the need to address it. To study this topic I embarked on a quantitative cross-sectional study, applying the skills I had learnt in the research methods module in practice. A systematic random sampling method was used to select participants from seven schools across Malta and Gozo, in which 1,169 persons participated. The grasp on SPSS and statistics gained through the medical statistics module allowed me to be able to analyse my own data, with advice from my helpful lecturers. I also carried out a systematic literature review as part of the dissertation.

The M.Sc. was an important a period of academic growth where I learnt the fundamental aspects of public health and mastered important skills of research methods and critical appraisal. I apply the knowledge I gained from this course in my everyday work. I am grateful

to the TESS scholarship scheme for supporting me, which definitely encourages more students to keep on learning.

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– TESS Scholarship*

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