

BAD Study Fellowship - Summer 2014

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Certificate of Medical Education

University of Dundee

I have always enjoyed teaching and through my registrar training years I was regularly involved in teaching medical students. I hoped they enjoyed my teaching sessions and more importantly learnt something from me, but I found that difficult to gauge as even with written feedback there is the suspicion that people either just want to please or it is too much effort to write a critique. I also felt that my approach to my teaching sessions was always the same and perhaps a little stale.

So it was with these thoughts that I approached the idea of learning more about medical education and discovered the Postgraduate Certificate of Medical Education (CME). I will be honest, the idea of self-directed learning over a three month period for each module (three are needed to complete the certificate) rather put me off but I decided it was now or never and signed myself up. I chose the CME course via distance learning from the University of Dundee as I could do the entire course remotely and having done my undergraduate medical degree at Dundee, I knew of its longstanding excellence in medical education.

The Certificate of Medical Education (CME) is the first step in postgraduate medical education courses and, as mentioned, consists of three modules (60 credits) and costs £3,000. The first two modules are mandatory but you can choose from a list of options for the third module. My three modules were: Learning and Teaching in Medical Education (mandatory); Principles of Assessment in Medical Education (mandatory) and Faculty Development in Health Professions. For those wanting to study medical education beyond the certificate level, there is the option (either from the outset or subsequently) to do the Diploma (120 credits) or Masters (180 credits).

Luckily for me the course administrators were introducing a new system into the CME programme which I was able to take part in. This new system meant that I was enrolled into each module at a set start date and the course was delivered over a 12 week period from that date. This also meant that the assessments required for each module had a set deadline. The previous system had allowed students to run through the course and submit assessments at their own pace – useful if you had busy and quiet periods within the rest of your working life but terrible if you are like me and good at procrastinating. The structured course with deadlines was perfect and really helped me to focus and work effectively through the material.

I found the theory in the first module a little confusing at times but working through the assessment really helped me to get a grasp of the general concepts and this background knowledge is very useful for the subsequent modules. The module on assessment was extremely useful and I found the assessment for the module very interesting and stimulating, even if it was 6000 words in length. My final module on faculty development was directly relevant to me and will be enormously beneficial to me in the future and I would highly recommend it to anyone taking this course.

The assessments for this CME course are both formative (only needed in two of the modules I did) and summative (all modules). The assessments took me many hours to complete but I found them a very useful way to consolidate my learning and I really enjoyed the challenge of writing them. The Faculty Development module was especially well done as you complete a workbook during the course and then use this as your blueprint for the assessment.

In conclusion, the Certificate of Medical Education is a great introduction into teaching and empowers you to think about your own teaching and provides ways of implementing change. I found the new, more structured system that Dundee are using to suit me very well and there was still flexibility in the system to facilitate holidays and busy periods. I would recommend this course to anyone interested in medical education or simply self-improvement, however it is important to be aware of the volume of work, especially the assessments.

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