Overseas clinical placements and academic exchange in podiatry

May 2013

Introduction

The Department of Podiatry has a 15-year history of offering ‘outward mobility’ clinical placements and exchanges for students. These enable students to experience clinical practice and study in environments that are quite different to Australia, whilst building competence and confidence in their professional skills. The Department strongly supports these programs for both Bundoora and Bendigo students, but please note that there are a limited number of places available for outward mobility, and that placement/exchange availability can change at short notice. More general information about studying overseas as a Faculty of Health Sciences student is available at: http://www.latrobe.edu.au/students/health/your-studies/study-overseas

Opportunities for students: Clinical placements

In fourth year of the Bachelor of Health Sciences/Master of Podiatric Practice, students undertake two 5-week external clinical placements. One of these can be an overseas placement. These placements are popular as they enable an overseas experience, and potentially be the catalyst for working in that country post-graduation. We have four centres that we have sent students to:

1. **Southwark Foot Health Services, London.** This placement is the most popular of the available clinical placements, with approximately 4-7 students attending placement here each year. It is popular due to the wide scope of practice available within the service, and that London is good base for a holiday before/after the placement.

2. **National University Hospital, Singapore.** This placement is usually taken up by 1-2 students per year, and is at one of Singapore’s main teaching hospitals.

3. **Singapore General Hospital, Singapore.** This placement is usually taken up by 1-2 students per year, and is situated at another of Singapore’s primary teaching hospitals.

4. **Southern General Hospital, Glasgow, Scotland.** This placement is usually taken up by 1-2 students per year, and is at the clinical facility that provides most of the experiences of podiatry students from Glasgow Caledonian University.

**Financial support:** As of May 2013, for a confirmed LTU-Faculty approved clinical placement (worldwide), the University will contribute A$1000 towards the costs of attending this placement. This payment can be accessed once the student returns from placement. Other financial support may be available (eg. An OS-HELP loan: http://studyassist.gov.au/sites/studyassist/helppayingmyfees/pages/os-help-loans-and-study-overseas); please check at the time you are considering applying.
Further information: towards the end of the third year, students will have the opportunity to request an overseas placement. If you are currently enrolled in third year podiatry in 2013 (as either a domestic or international student): you will receive further information from Nikki Frescos and Justine Bonanno about the option for overseas placements in October 2013 (immediately after we have confirmed the places with the overseas agencies). There is no further information available about these placements until then!

Opportunities for students: Academic Exchange

Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU) accepts La Trobe podiatry students for a 5 month academic exchange without a time penalty (ie. students are able to complete their degrees in 4 years).

GCU is located in Glasgow, Scotland: http://www.gcu.ac.uk/.

GCU’s Study Abroad page: http://www.gcu.ac.uk/study/exchangestudyabroad/partners/

The approved 5-month exchange involves the LTU podiatry student progressing to the third year of the course (ie. finishing the first two years at LTU), and then starting at GCU in early January of their third year, staying at GCU until late May. There will be 4 exchange places available for January-May 2014, for which applications are highly competitive. The Semester 1, Year 3 subjects map to the GCU modules as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LTU Third Year Podiatry Subjects (Year 3, Semester 1)</th>
<th>GCU Podiatry Modules (Year 2, early January to late May)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>POD4PAM</strong> Podiatry Assessment and Management</td>
<td><strong>M2B813214</strong> Surgery and Radiology for Podiatrists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluate lower limb neurological and vascular competence, as well as, interpret radiographic and laboratory tests. LTU students on exchange at GCU will need LMS access to this subject whilst they are away.</td>
<td>Radiographic imaging, x-ray, bone scan, MRI and CT investigations. Vascular and neurological assessments using diagnostic equipment and criteria to establish the validity and reliability of clinical signs and symptoms. These skills will be consolidated in the clinical module M2B313212. <em>The elements of this module are taught in GCU semester 1 (LTU semester 2) therefore will already have been covered with the class. It is proposed that the student use the additional time in the weekly calendar for directed learning and on-line podcasts from LTU and GCU.</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POD4CBP</strong> Clinical Biomechanics in Podiatry - Develop understanding of podiatric biomechanics and knowledge in orthotic theory.</td>
<td><strong>M2B313213</strong> Podiatric Theory 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POD4PAS</strong> Podiatry Anaesthesia and Surgery</td>
<td><strong>M2B813214</strong> Surgery and Radiology for Podiatrists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In this subject students will develop their understanding of local anaesthesia and knowledge of podiatric surgical techniques of the nails and skin.</td>
<td>Will provide knowledge and understanding of local anaesthetics required for podiatric practice. Presents the principles of podiatric and orthopaedic surgical management of the foot and nails.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>POD4PPC</strong> Podiatry Practice C</td>
<td><strong>M2B313212</strong> Clinical Podiatry Year 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under clinical supervision, students will provide treatment to clients attending the University's on-site Podiatry clinic. Before going on exchange, LTU 2nd year students will need to spend extra time in the internal summer clinic to prepare them for GCU.</td>
<td>Matches POD4PPC, introduces students to more specialist clinics (eg. high-risk). Students complete 6hrs of practical skills per week = 72hrs per semester.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = GCU modules are double modules running over 2 semesters. The short descriptors above have been taken from specific elements of the modules to map across to the learning outcomes of the LTU modules i.e. the elements described are inclusive not exclusive of the module content. These elements described will be taught in GCU semester 2, LTU semester 1.

Once students have returned from GCU (and usually a European summer holiday after their exchange), they will then rejoin their cohort for semester two of the third year at LTU.
Financial support: As of May 2013, a LTU-approved semester exchange in Europe, the University will contribute A$2000 towards the exchange. Other financial support may be available (competitive bursaries/awards from the University or an OS-HELP loan: http://studyassist.gov.au/sites/studyassist/helppayingmyfees/pages/os-help-loans-and-study-overseas); please check at the time you are considering applying.

Further information: If you are currently enrolled in second year podiatry in 2013 (as either a domestic or international student), please note the following timeframes and information about applying for exchange to GCU in January-May 2014:

- **May-July 2013:** If you are a Bundoora student, the first step is to email Adam Bird (a.bird@latrobe.edu.au) to make a time for an appointment to discuss your interest in exchange. If you are a Bendigo student, please contact Byron Perrin (b.perrin@latrobe.edu.au).

- If after this meeting you wish to pursue an application, please carefully read the following web page: [http://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/edabroad/exchange/la-trobe-students-going-on-exchange](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/edabroad/exchange/la-trobe-students-going-on-exchange).


- If you have any issues with completing your application, please visit the Global Lounge (see the bottom of this web page for 'drop-in' times specific for ‘Europe’): [http://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/edabroad/exchange/la-trobe-students-going-on-exchange](http://www.latrobe.edu.au/international/edabroad/exchange/la-trobe-students-going-on-exchange).

- Please note that your academic marks are important when applying for an exchange to GCU – the minimum WAM (weighted average mean marks across your podiatry subjects, including semester one results from 2013), is 70%. As the number of exchange places is limited (4 for 2014), and this is a competitive process, your WAM will form an important part of your application. So, the message is to do the best you can in your studies if you want to increase your chances of going on exchange!

- **16th August 2013:** The last date in which to submit your completed application. However, as putting together an application is a relatively complicated process, it is a good idea to complete and submit your application well before this date!
Student Feedback

Feedback from podiatry students who have been on academic exchange or overseas clinical placements:

Maddie McMahon: (Glasgow Caledonian University, January-May 2012) Deciding to go on exchange was one of the best things I have ever done. It is a once in a lifetime opportunity that very few people can say they have experienced. It helps you grow as a person as you step outside your comfort zone and you become open to things you may not have been before. It forces you to become more independent and reliant on yourself, which helps you realise your strengths and weaknesses.

I was the first La Trobe Podiatry student to go on exchange to Glasgow Caledonian University, which was a huge honour. It was a huge step to take to live overseas for 6 months but one definitely worth taking!

When I was leaving, people were telling me such negative things about Glasgow, which naturally made me worry a bit. When I arrived however, their perceptions couldn’t have been more wrong. For example, when I was walking around the city centre for the first time with a huge map, no less than five people asked me if I needed directions. One lady actually walked me 10 minutes out of her way to show me where to go. It reminded me of Australia with the friendly and laid back nature of the people who are always willing to lend a helping hand. Scotland is such a beautiful country and I have never been anywhere quite like it. I’ve learnt that you can’t rely on other people’s judgements; you have to experience everything for yourself to get a real perspective.

My class at GCU was about a third of the size compared to La Trobe, with all of us in all the same lectures and tutorials. This allowed me to get to know everyone very fast and I was overwhelmed with all the support given by the students and lecturers alike. Clinic was where I felt I progressed the most, with the aim of treating one patient per hour and the patients being never in short supply! I was also lucky enough to treat a few patients at the spinal unit at the hospital, administer my first local anaesthetic on a patient and view a partial nail avulsion. Studying a GCU confirmed that Podiatry was the right field for me. It opened my eyes to the many aspects and opportunities available within the field, which gave to me the inspiration and drive I needed.

The student halls are a great option for accommodation as it is right across the road from the university and in the centre of town. It is also a great way to meet locals and also international students from all over the world.

There is also the opportunity to do some travelling before and after the semester. I was lucky enough to go to France, The Netherlands, Belgium, Austria, Slovakia, Italy, Scotland, England, Ireland and I even squeezed in the United States! An important thing to note is that with an Australian accent, you will always be greeted with a smile and never be short of friends - everybody just wants to hear you talk! It’s quite the novelty when you are in a foreign country and I never got tired of it. Remember to keep the myth going: we do have kangaroos in our backyard!
Katherine Flanagan: I recently returned (January 2012) from studying abroad at Queen Margaret University Edinburgh, Scotland. The effort and the organisation poured into the application process definitely paid off and now, that I am back in Australia, I look back and know that exchange was easily one of the most amazing experiences that I have encountered yet. The friends who quickly became family and amazing experience of living abroad whilst studying are indescribable.

I took serious advantage of the convenience of travelling and the novelty of boarding a 2hr flight that landed you in Eastern Europe opposed to sunny old Queensland, never wore off. From an academic perspective, studying at QMU exposed me to a clinical setting much earlier than what I had preempted and as Queen Margaret is a much smaller university than La Trobe, our year level was a ‘wee’ family and within weeks, I felt as if I’d studied at QMU all along. Which brings me to a very important point: never underestimate the power of the Australian accent. Exchange not only gave me a different perspective on university life, but a different perspective on my own. Such an experience gave me a heightened sense of confidence, independence and knowledge that I can challenge myself. Exchange has easily been one of the greatest experiences, I cannot recommend it highly enough and I encourage anyone who can partake in exchange to, in the words of Nike, just to do it!

Above: Katherine (seated) in the Queen Margaret University podiatry clinic with fellow students.

NB: QMU academic exchange is still an option for LTU students, but would require a full-year exchange, and would add a year to the total length of the course (ie. 5 years rather than 4 years). Please speak to Adam Bird if you would still be interested in this as an option.

I was lucky enough to have the opportunity to go to London for my final placement in Podiatry. I worked in Southwark (South London) in the National Health Service (NHS) for 7 weeks and loved every minute of it! Being able to work in an amazing city such as London was an incredible experience and I learnt so much.

I completed 10 nail surgeries and had a full patient load; I may not have had this opportunity if I had stayed in Australia. I was able to travel around the country and had time to travel through France, Switzerland, Monaco, Italy, Czech Republic, Austria, Germany, Netherlands, Ireland, Scotland and Spain. I met some really wonderful people and have plans for my next trip. If it wasn’t for the opportunity to complete my placement overseas, I wouldn’t have had one of the best years of my life all while completing my degree.