

Master of Science in Gerodontology (Dental Technology)

Course overview:

Europe is an ageing population, with many older adults living longer due to advancements in health and standard of living. These substantial improvements in life expectancy should be coupled with an improvement and maintenance of health and associated quality of life.

Dentistry is also reflecting these developments with larger numbers of older adults retaining more of their natural dentitions. These trends are eliciting more interest in the aging mouth in order to mitigate the ever-increasing prevalence of chronic oral diseases and health inequalities. Ageing societies will require adaptation in order to tackle these emerging challenges. The course intends to address these experiences by preparing dental professionals in this rapidly evolving area of Dentistry.

The programme is structured over a three-year academic period, inclusive of 2 semesters per year and two summer periods of eight weeks each. You will be exposed to the theoretical and scientific foundation of the profession of gerodontology and also become skilful in clinical practice within the professional environment of the teaching clinics and other settings, in a timely and structured manner as follows:

1st year: The first year will provide you with introductory knowledge on the gerodontology and specific areas of dentistry and medicine. The latter two areas will lay down the foundations for clinical practice. In parallel, you will perform clinical/laboratory treatment. Clinical treatment will be provided in a dental clinic set-up. You will engage in the review of literature related to gerodontology and associated disciplines.

2nd year: You will further develop intellectually by receiving in-depth knowledge focused on specific areas of gerodontology, including domiciliary services and gerontology. You will further engage in the review of literature related to gerodontology and associated disciplines, to analyse, evaluate and highlight existing gaps. The second year will provide the foundations for the research project in third year by the delivery of research methodology and submission of a research proposal.

On the practical front, you will focus on the professional-patient relationship and engage in the management of older adult patients in traditional clinical environments as well as providing domiciliary services in diverse settings. The latter will allow you to further develop your clinical and technical skills.

3rd year: The final year of the course will be mainly dedicated to a research project. Clinically, you will refine your intellectual and clinical/technical proficiency and therefore seek direct employment in this specialized area, after completion of studies.

Learning outcomes:

a) Subject Knowledge and Understanding:

The primary objective of the course is to establish the profession of gerodontology on a national level. More specifically the course will provide a sufficient body of knowledge to enable recipients of the degree to undertake their prescribed work amongst older adults, with care, safety and responsibility and to recognize the full scope of their remit.

The objectives of the course are to familiarize you with:

1. Concepts of oral and general health and disease in the older person.
2. Demographic trends of population ageing.
3. The multidisciplinary approach to the management of older persons under their care.
4. Ethical principles when evaluating social and health care practices in ageing care.
5. Concepts of promoting active ageing in society.
6. Treatment-related skills in the field of gerodontology.
7. Concepts of clinical governance in providing dental care to the older person.
8. Scientific and clinical research procedures in dental disease using evidence-based methodology.

b) Intellectual Development:

The Master of Gerodontology provides you with an opportunity to acquire reflective and thinking skills, critically appraise literature in gerodontology and provide a sound basis for their practice in a multidisciplinary team. The course will provide a platform for you to teach theoretic and clinical skills to undergraduate students in dentistry. Specifically, it will allow you to:

1. Analyse the diversity in the experiences of older persons and the impact of age, gender, ethnicity, oral- and general health factors on their life course.
2. Identify and mitigate the barriers to oral health when treatment planning and managing patients.
3. Develop educational teaching skills by exposing them to undergraduate teaching.
4. Explain the multidisciplinary approach to working with older persons and their carers.
5. Develop a professional identity as a gerodontologist to effectively work within an interdisciplinary team.
6. Develop knowledge of relevant policy- and service-related issues in supporting and caring for older persons.

c) Key Transferable Skills:

The course will provide you with:

1. A platform for learning and refining soft skills by interacting within a multidisciplinary team providing care for older persons. These skills will be transferable to the population at large throughout their professional career.
2. Research skills to investigate issues within this field.
3. Professionalism based on ethical standards and expectations in dentistry.
4. Advocacy skills to participate in policy formation of oral health- and ageing-related matters.