

BE a leader in public health management, stay ahead by enhancing knowledge and skills in public health without compromising on employment with an open and distance learning (ODL) programme by International Medical University (IMU).

With the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic, managing public health is a skill that is currently relevant to all healthcare professionals and non-healthcare graduates working in the healthcare sector. At IMU, the Master of Science in Public Health (MScPH) programme facilitates the building of a solid foundation in good leadership that focuses on improving the health of the whole population with emphasis on the prevention of disease within a community. It involves training in effective communication, critical thinking, attention to detail, development of self-control and confidence in handling public health issues including disasters and pandemics.

It is without a doubt that the Covid-19 pandemic came with great challenges to academia. By that time, IMU already had an established ODL MScPH programme specifically catered to individuals who do not have the luxury of attending on-campus classes, giving them the opportunity to complete the course from the comforts of their own home. With the ODL MScPH programme, students can enhance their qualifications while being employed by enrolling as part-time students, where they can complete the course over two to six years.

The IMU MScPH programme attracts students from diverse health backgrounds, including nursing, pharmaceutical, medical, health administration and business. One of these students is Dr Shazatul Shazmin, a part-time ODL student and an employee of the Health Ministry, who states that the flexibility of the part-time programme "allowed balancing between work, life and acquisition of higher education which will enhance (her) career pathway of a public health physician."

The MScPH programme is offered not only through online delivery but on-campus delivery as well, open to both local and

Developing leadership in public health



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international students. Despite the setbacks posed by Covid-19, there has been a seamless transition from on-campus learning activities to online. This is because IMU had already embarked on teaching via digital technology for many years prior to the crisis. Even with this head start, with the prolonged MCO, IMU had to develop new approaches to delivering the programme with greater agility and flexibility without compromising on teaching and learning outcomes.

Abigail, a student from the on-campus MScPH programme, shares, "We are in a generation that spends a lot of time online, so switching learning methods to online was

a relatively smooth process. The lecturers from all the modules made this possible and they continue to be very responsive. The frequency of emails and TEAMS meetings have been very conducive to learning."

The MScPH programme is focused on providing an exciting curriculum for the students, with a variety of teaching methods employed, including tutorials, videos, practical, field visits, seminar presentations, interactive videos, case discussions, on-site public health attachments and lectures.

Students are taught important aspects of public health for the duties that they will be expected to conduct, such as data collection,

analysis and interpretation; community health needs research and investigative epidemic research; development of strategies and programmes in disease prevention; intersectoral collaboration with other healthcare agencies for community health improvement; establishing alliances for the appraisal and improvement of policies and legislation involving health and disease prevention; planning and executing effective health promotion events and programmes to increase ownership and empowerment of individuals and communities regarding their health and well-being in line with the World Health Organization's consolidated guideline recommendations on self-care interventions for health 2021.

This content is delivered by experienced faculty, who have specialised public health experience in the government and private sectors both nationally and internationally.

IMU offers postgraduate programmes including Master in Science programmes in Public Health, Analytical and Pharmaceutical Chemistry, Molecular Medicine, Acupuncture and Pharmacy Practice; Master of Counselling; Postgraduate Diplomas in Diabetes Management and Education, Implant Dentistry, Endodontics and Prosthodontics; postgraduate programmes in Health Professions Education, Health Informatics and Analytics and Business Administration in Healthcare Management as well as MSc and PhD in Medical and Health Sciences.

■ For more information, call 03-2731 7272, email postgraduate@imu.edu.my or visit www.imu.edu.my