

DSLTL: The student experience.

You've read the professional DSLTL blurb, now what's it really like from a student point of view?

As I write, I am keeping in mind the questions I pondered upon last year when I apprehensively completed the application form. As the first academic year finishes I have now been given the opportunity to inform you about what this new professional doctorate in Speech and Language Therapy is really like.

Two days per week are allocated the DSLTL and the other three are my work based, speech therapy days. I find this balance works well as it allows me to keep my clinical skills in check whilst studying, which a traditional PhD would have prohibited me from doing.

The first year has consisted of a series of modules including Personal and Professional Management skills, Research Methods in Primary Care and Professional Development in Practice. These have been carefully selected to lend to work based learning and our individual research projects. A substantial proportion of our programme is via e-learning and the 'MOODLE' virtual learning environment. Forums, on-line lectures and discussions have become a way of life simplifying long distance and work based learning.

A recurrent theme among several 'PhD' colleagues is that they feel isolated in their studies. I can reassure you that this is not my personal experience on the DSLTL. Our group is small, but we very much feel that this is a journey and we are all in it together. The department leads have strongly advocated an open door policy and all our questions or 'issues' have been swiftly dealt with.

Initially, I was apprehensive about the format as I was keen to immediately commence my research project. Consequently, I have developed a wider scope of both speech therapy and academic skills which may have eluded me had I chosen the traditional method. I continue to pursue my academic interests with excellent support but have the benefit of picking up extra skills along the way. Although challenging, the workload is manageable and dare I say it . . . enjoyable.

I suppose in reading this you are questioning if this is the course for you? All I can offer is that if you want to pursue your academic interests whilst continuing to develop your work based skills, then maybe this is one to consider.

Has it been worth it? Defiantly, but ask me again this time next year.