

Intercalated BSc in Genomic Medicine

Written testimonial provided by Tomos Morgan (Graduated July 2023).

There are so many good reasons behind wanting to intercalate. The most obvious is an opportunity to immerse yourself in a branch of medicine you already find interesting. If you already have a burning passion for genetics, I suggest you read no further and intercalate! However, if similar to me, you aren't sure at this point which speciality you're interested in or which intercalation option appeals to you the most, I will try to convince you why the genomic medicine BSc course is a great choice.

I've always been interested in how applied research and developing technologies are translated into the clinic. In the first term, scientists will teach you the basic science underpinning genetic testing, and bioinformaticians will teach you how the data from these tests are analysed. These are quite abstract concepts to begin with. However, this course is unique in the fact that you have the opportunity to sit in on genetics clinics during the second term. Here, you will see these concepts being applied to real patients, and when you do, you will have a good understanding of exactly how these tests work. This was the best aspect of the course for me personally, as I often feel in medicine we rotate through specialities too quickly to appreciate their intricacies. Clinical genetics is a really fascinating speciality, and learning about the field in a linear manner (from the basic science to the clinic) was refreshing and exciting.

If exposure to research is the main factor drawing you towards intercalating, genomics is a great avenue for this too. There is a wide breadth of project options to choose from, as genetics touches on so many fields and medical specialities. Much of mine was focused around neuroscience, and my project was a small facet of a much larger research paper. I gained an appreciation of the complexity of generating a research paper but also knowing that some of the data I collected may be used as part of the paper was very satisfying! I feel that it was during the research project that I really made some strides in developing new skills. In the first term, you will learn the theory behind statistical analysis and analysing research papers. However, it is when you apply this theory to your own project in the second term that things start to make sense, and you really start developing these skills!

I will also mention the teaching on the genomics course. Most of the teaching is done by small group lectures and teaching sessions. The nature of small group teaching means plenty of opportunities to ask questions about the material, or even engage in open discussion with scientists, bioinformaticians and clinicians who really are experts and leaders in their fields.

An additional BSc is a great addition to the CV. However, it is not an easy ride and you will be required to learn in a different way than you're used to on the C21 course. But, I believe that this makes it all the more worth-while, and I'm sure the skills you develop as a result will have a real practical value.

In summary, I personally found genomics to be a fascinating field, and I am considering clinical genetics as a speciality in the future. In any case, I believe you will be hard-pressed to find a degree that will be more relevant to the future of medicine, whichever path you choose to go down.