

Student view

Name: Mark Muldoon

Programme: Higher Certificate in Science, Good Manufacturing & Technology



I started off in the building trade - I'm a qualified clerk-of-works - but switched to the pharmaceutical industry several years ago and now work as a manufacturing drug product co-ordinator for Abbott Ireland in Sligo.

I always thought that if you had enough experience you could move up the career ladder but a couple of years ago the production manager told me I would need to get a degree if I wanted to move into management. I could have taken it the wrong way and got down about it but instead decided to take the bull by the horns. I had a look around and set my sights on the degree in Pharmaceutical Technology here in Tallaght. I've just finished the first stage of that - the Higher Certificate in Science, GMP & Technology - and now I'm going straight into the follow-on degree programme.

I chose ITT Dublin for the simple reason that I can complete my degree in three and a half years compared with six years in other institutes. Living in Sligo and studying in Dublin is obviously not ideal and I did miss a few lectures I would have liked to attend. Having said that, the lecturers were always available on email and over the phone if I needed help and were always very supportive. It was distance learning in action.

The most challenging thing, actually, was not the logistics but convincing myself in the beginning that I should and could go back to college after working for many years. All the old insecurities came back. But I decided to go for it and I have to say that the people at the Institute were very supportive and always there on the phone if I had any questions.

My advice to anyone who, like myself, is thinking of going back to study after a long time in the workforce is that it's okay to feel apprehensive and frightened - but do it and don't be afraid to ask for help. The bottom line is that in a couple of years' time you'll have a recognised qualification. And all that experience you have will be backed up by a piece of paper which is going to enable you to move on in your career.

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Student view

Name: Suzanne Hannon

Programme: Higher Certificate - Sterile Services Technology



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I work as a technician in the Dublin Dental School & Hospital and am studying for a Higher Certificate in Sterile Services Technology at ITT Dublin. The course began in September 2007 and is due to finish in May, after which I plan to go on in 2009/2010 for my degree in Sterile Services Management.

In the job I do, it's very important to understand how to do things in a certain way and why. Working with blood, bacteria, micro-organisms and pathogens learning how to destroy them is extremely important. We also sterilise medical devices and the course also provides a lot of information about this aspect.

The course is well structured - we're in college for one seven-hour day every week. I particularly enjoy the practical lab sessions which lets you get more involved.

Sometimes having to complete assignments and study for exams can be tough when you're doing a full-time job as well. But I'm lucky in that I get a lot of support from my employers. I get time off for study so I don't have to do so much in my own time. They also fund my course. Without them and my manager encouraging me to take this on as part of my personal development I wouldn't be where I am today.

I have been a team leader for a long time now and with this degree I can apply for positions that become available. Or I can use my qualifications to help educate staff and students who work or study in my organisation. Right now, I am very happy where I am but hopefully someday I will be able to take on a managerial role.

I would definitely recommend this course to others. If this is the career you've chosen, you'll need this qualification to get you where you want to be.

Student view

Name: Victoria Hayes

Programme: Masters in Pharmaceutical Production



I work as a bioanalyst at Wyeth Biotech at Grange Castle. I've just finished my Masters in Pharmaceutical Production. This is my third qualification from ITT Dublin - I hold a Diploma in Bioanalysis (1998) and an H.Dip. in Pharmaceutical Production (2008) so I know the place pretty well at this stage!

The decision to study here again was made very easy by the fact that I'd only had great memories of my time in ITT when I did my original diploma, so I was looking forward to coming back here. The location was also ideal, being so close to work.

The programme was totally different from what I expected. I came straight into the masters course from the H.Dip. with a two week break in between. I expected the masters to be even more intense than the H.Dip. but actually it's more about working independently, increasing understanding, researching information and managing your own work in your own time. Also, the focus in written assignments is not so much on finding a right or wrong answer or solving a problem but actually discussing your own thoughts and ideas on a topic. It's all about developing ideas, troubleshooting and thinking outside the box.

The course content was excellent. Not only was it very relevant to industry but some of the lectures were given by people working in industry. It was great to get a practical and realistic insight into different areas.

There was less time spent in lectures compared to the H.Dip. course but then there was more out of hours reading to cover. Overall, I found it easy enough to juggle study and work.

The course was informative, practical, relevant, challenging (but in a good way) and well paced and I would definitely recommend it to anyone. I already have mentioned it to my work colleagues, many of whom are interested in returning to learning to keep their knowledge up to date and their brains active and also to help them move into new areas.

In an ideal world I would win the lotto, leave work and return to college full time to complete a doctorate - just because for some strange reason I've always liked studying! In the meantime I intend to continue developing in my current role, become involved in new projects and apply the knowledge I've gained from my studies. I really feel that having completed the H.Dip. and the masters I have given myself the opportunity to move in any direction I want. So even though I'm happy in my current role I feel happier that the option of change is available to me.