

LUSUMA'S BOOK OF

# INTERCALATION REVIEWS

A compilation of reviews from  
Leicester students, to help you make  
a decision that suits you.



**LUSUMA**  
Leicester University Students' Union Medical Association

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to this LUSUMA booklet of intercalation reviews!

Whether or not to intercalate is one of the first big career decisions you'll make as a medic. It's not an easy one — what you do will have an impact on not just your clinical and academic career, but also on your finances and personal life.

As if that wasn't daunting enough, the decision to intercalate gives rise to a variety of new choices: What to study? Leicester or away? Between what years of medical school?

The reviews below are the result of past intercalators kindly taking the time to share their experiences. They discuss the highs and the lows, and aim to give you an insight into the kinds of things you'll want to consider when making the decisions above. Ultimately though, the choice has to be yours. We hope that this booklet helps you make the decision that's best for you.

LUSUMA Love,

**Suraj Gandhi**

LUSUMA Secretary 2020-21

xoxo

## **MARCUS PANCHAL**

BSc Biomedical Engineering, Imperial College London, 2018-19

### **How did you find the application process?**

The application process was very simple, and involved submitting a 2 page Personal Statement along with 1 Reference from an academic member of staff at the university and a transcript of my academic marks. I found it very helpful to attend the Intercolated BSc fair at Imperial in order to speak to both current students as well as the head of the programme, which allowed me to gain a better understanding of what elements they were looking for in the personal statement. Even though the BSc is in an engineering specialty the prerequisites for this are very minimal (only A level Mathematics) as a lot of mathematics and physics is taught to you during the course itself. One benefit is that there is no interview process, however this means that you need to sell yourself well in the personal statement. I would also recommend getting a reference from a member of staff that knows you well rather than just a tutor that you meet very infrequently as this will help to boost your application. The application itself is all done through an online portal via Imperial's own website with the application date quite late (usually towards the end of march) however I would definitely start to think about your application at least 2 months before hand in order to get everything in place for your submission with plenty of time.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

I intercalated between years 2 and 3 of medical school (i.e between phase 1 and phase 2). I chose this in part because I didn't want to break up my clinical years which I believed are important to take consecutively to help retain information and skills. I was happy I did this as naturally some medical knowledge does get forgotten during your intercalation (due to sub-specialising in a specific area for a long period of time) and as the transition between year 2 and year 3 is very supported by the medical school, as it will be the first time you start placements rather than just lectures, I felt it was a lot easier to regain/ pickup my knowledge and skills again without a lot of intense expectation by clinicians.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

My intercalation course was designed to be modular and was split into 3 sections: Core Modules, Optional Modules and a Group Project. Before you start the course, there is also some online pre-reading material on mathematics and engineering which helps to get you up to scratch on the basics before you start the course. This doesn't take too much time however you get a large amount of time to complete this. At the start of the course there are 3 Core modules comprising of the Fundamentals of Engineering (Electrical Circuits/ Systems and Mechanics/Physics) as well as Probability and Statistics and a Journal Club. The Optional modules range from Biomimetics (the translation of biological systems to the design of non-biological engineering systems); Hearing and Speech Processing (involving the mathematics of

signal processing); Tissue Engineering and Regenerative Medicine (looking at the cell signaling pathways involved with Stem Cell technologies, Artificial grafts and Organ on a Chip systems); Physiological Monitoring (including the chemistry behind the detection of specific molecules by electronic systems/biosensors); Image Processing (the computational mathematics behind biological and computer vision systems); and many more options. The great thing about Bioengineering is that there is an area of research for pretty much anything so you are bound to find something interesting to learn. The optional modules are also at different times of the year so by choosing the right modules you can also tailor your work load for the different terms to suit you. The final part of the course is a year long Group Project where you are put into a group with six 3rd year MEng students to take part in a research project in some area of Biomedical engineering. I myself did work on Neural Prosthetic Control which involved experimentation as well as computational work. However there are a wide variety of labs within Bioengineering where you can work on anything from novel bio-sensors; regenerative grafts; autonomous control of vehicles; synthetic biology; and deep learning tasks. So whether you enjoy working in a laboratory or programming software, there's something for everyone to enjoy. The pairing with the Engineering students is great as it allows you to learn a lot of engineering from them as well as allowing you to bring your own medical knowledge into the project, and you never feel out of your depth during the project as there is always support. The project culminates in a group thesis at the end of the year, as well as an oral presentation of your work. In terms of assessment, the vast majority of the course is examination based (usually either multiple choice or SAQ style questions) which are done in January and at the End of the Year in May. I particularly preferred this as I'm not a big coursework fan and the fact that the course is modular means that I don't have to use knowledge of every module in every exam (which is a nice reprieve from Medical School Examinations).

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

I thoroughly enjoyed living in a new city, and especially in London where there is so much to do both inside and outside the university. There's a vast range of restaurants/bars to go to in the evening (good quality ones too) as well as a variety of attractions such as Winter Wonderland, the Museum's (which are right next to the Imperial campus), and the Tube is a great way to get around quickly. The course is a mixture of Imperial and external students so it is also nice to be able to meet people from other universities and share experiences and the 2 more relaxed timetable of an intercalated degree allows you to enjoy activities with friends. London can seem a little bit intimidating if you're not originally from there however I very quickly became acclimatised to the pace of life there and there's always venturing into one of the many parks if you need to chill out for a bit with some nice scenery.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

My favourite part of intercalation was the chance to learn a large breadth of knowledge on subjects outside of medicine which I probably would not have gotten the chance to engage with otherwise. I also really enjoyed participating in all the societies and extracurricular activities that Imperial has to offer, especially the Academic societies which offer tutorial series on a range of

practical topics that can't be found in many other universities. The campus is also in an amazing position in South Kensington, with the Science and Natural History museums as well as the Royal Albert Hall, which makes the walk into University feel very special. Finally, because the cohort for the intercalated degree is usually very small (around 30 or so) this means that you get to become on much more personal terms with your lecturers (I still speak with several of my lecturers even now) which creates a friendly atmosphere (allowing you to approach staff much more easily when you have difficulty with an area).

### **Any downsides?**

The only downside's I found were the cost of living in London which is a lot greater than for Leicester by some way (especially if you are not originally from London). However with proper budgeting I didn't find this too much of a problem (the Uni bars are usually well subsidised for food and drink compared to pubs outside). Another downside is that when you return back to the medical degree, the majority of your original cohort are likely to be in the year above (including friends), and so you may not know many people in the year you come back to. This is unlikely to be a lasting problem however as you can soon make new friends and re-establish connections with old friends very quickly during your clinical placements.

### **Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

My main piece of advise would be to get stuck in with as many extra-curricular activities and societies as possible while you are on intercalation as the relaxed nature of the degree allows you more time to engage with them. This helps you to get a lot out of your time away from medicine and gives you a lot of opportunities to do things you otherwise might not have thought possible. I would also start planning your application earlier rather than later so that you can submit the best possible personal statement (which is important as London Intercalation positions are highly sought after and so are very competitive).

## **PATRICK MACALLISTER**

BSc Medical Science, Queens University Belfast, 2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

The application process for my course was very simple and accessible. QUB have a webpage specifically for the intercalated degrees they offer, allowing you to research each course in detail and find one that suits you best. The application is in the form of a downloadable pdf that you fill out and email to the medical school office.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

Between years 3 and 4. This was ideal as it is right in the middle of the medical course, allowing for an adequate break. As well as this, I wanted to have at least two years of medical school before I qualified, rather than intercalating and then being thrown straight into 5th year for the apprenticeship....fairly 'rusty' having had a year-long break away from Medicine.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

My course consisted of three year-long modules. Two of these consisted of a series of lectures, seminars and tutorials throughout the year with coursework in the form of essays and structured questions. The modules I chose were 'Cardiovascular Pathobiology and Treatment' and 'Clinical Pharmacology and Therapeutics'. The final module was in the form of a year-long research project. The focus of my chosen research involved assessing the anxiety levels in patients prior to receiving an intravitreal injection and how specific language used by injectors may influence any anxious feelings these patients may have. The research project involved conducting a literature review prior to commencing the collection of data, a dissertation write up that focussed on a specific aspect of the findings and an oral presentation of our results to a panel of academics at QUB.

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

I went to Queens University Belfast as I am from Belfast and wanted to enjoy a year of study back at home.

What was your favourite thing about intercalating?

The increased exposure to scientific writing. I feel you do not get much experience of this at medical school and it is something that all future clinicians and specialists will have to use at some stage in their training and for any research they undertake.

### **Any downsides?**

The majority of my intercalation took place virtually due to social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic, but despite this it was still a great experience.

**Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Aim to stay on top of your workload and keep to a healthy pace whereby you still have somewhat of a break from Medicine but you don't let the workload pile up too high!

## **JULIET EDEY**

BSc Neuroscience and Mental Health, Imperial College London, 2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

The application involved writing a personal statement, choosing a referee and sending documents through. It took some organisation but the overall process was not too taxing, definitely when compared with medical school applications!

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

I intercalated between 4th and 5th year because I wasn't sure whether I wanted to do it until quite late, and also my group of friends were mostly intercalating at this time as well. I would recommend sticking with your friends if you can as this is what gets you through medicine! I was also worried about doing 4th year after a year away from medicine, but in hindsight the 4th year exam had very little 3rd year content in it so this would have been fine.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

The first term was lectures and 3 assignments. Then there was a self-directed group literature review to do in January, and February until the end of May was dedicated to the dissertation. This was a good structure, and I enjoyed the opportunity to work on my own terms which we never get in medicine!

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

I intercalated at imperial but since it was all remote I lived with my parents in south London. The imperial students tend to live in Hammersmith which is a lovely area in west London, but is quite expensive and can be a little difficult to get to on public transport.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

The opportunity to focus on extracurricular activities and feel like a normal student because of the timetable freedom and not having to go to placement. Also it is great to discover new interests through an introduction to academia and cool lectures!

### **Any downsides?**

Research and working to deadlines is incredibly difficult and stressful, but going through this definitely equips you with valuable skills which go beyond academic ability, such as communication skills, resilience, determination and the ability to manage uncertainty.

### **Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

It is great to use the intercalation opportunity to get a Masters degree, however there is significantly more work associated with this and you will be working throughout the summer, so

make sure to weigh up the pros and cons as it is ideal to return from intercalation well rested since medicine itself is hard enough! Additionally, try to make the most of the dissertation by discussing submitting it to conference with your supervisor, or even working towards publication. Most of all, enjoy the opportunity to study a topic of your choice and to have a break from the medicine treadmill!

## **SOPHIE WAKELING**

BSc in Psychology, University of Leicester, 2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

Since the degree was at Leicester, the application process was simple. You had to ask a member of staff for a reference (I asked my phase 1 tutor) and write a paragraph about why you wanted to do it. You also had to write down which modules you want to study, but don't worry if you change your mind later.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

I intercalated between third and fourth year and I really liked it. It meant that I had a year of clinical experience before intercalating and I was excited to get back to the clinical years once I had finished.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

In psychology, you do three modules per term (so a total of 6 modules) plus a dissertation. In the first term, two of these modules are compulsory and you pick one. I picked forensic psychology which was my favourite module of the year. I liked it because it was so different from anything I had learnt before. In the second term, you do one compulsory module and you pick two. You also have tutorials, an essay and a presentation specific to intercalation so that you can learn the skills required to succeed (for example, how to read research papers and how to write essays).

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

I stayed in Leicester for my intercalation, however I would go elsewhere if I were to do it again. I think intercalation is a great opportunity to see a new city. I enjoyed my time (as much as I could, given the circumstances) being a 'normal student' and joining societies. However, I feel I did not get the full experience because my intercalation was predominantly online due to COVID.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

I really enjoyed the opportunity to write a dissertation and to study one topic in a lot of depth. It was also nice to get to pick modules. Lastly, I liked the flexibility of intercalation and the amount spare time I had to do other things.

### **Any downsides?**

For me, almost everything was online and no societies were running socials because of COVID so I didn't get the 'normal' uni experience that I was hoping for. However, things are in person again now so, this doesn't apply.

Also, it is an extra year without an income so, that is something worth considering (I worked part time throughout the year).

**Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Do it! Intercalation is a great opportunity that you won't get again.

## **BARDYA MANAVI**

BSc in Psychology with Basic Medical Sciences King's College London,  
2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

I had a lot of help from my Phase 1 tutor both for references and directing me to course websites etc. Overall, there are things to be aware of, like having to write multiple personal statements if you are applying to external institutions, especially references, end of year transcripts, suspension of degree etc; but it is still manageable and nothing to really worry about.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

Between the 2nd and the 3rd years, the academic year of 20/21.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

The course had four modules, Abnormal Psychology, Health and Illness across the Lifespan (HIAL), Cognitive Neuropsychology & Research Methods and Statistics (RMS), with the last module being predominately to teach you statistical analysis for your research project (i.e. the dissertation). All of the course, i.e., the lectures, the practicals, presentations and the research project were online as I did my intercalation during the initial peak of the Covid-19 pandemic. All the modules run for two semesters except RMS, which runs only for the first semester and in the 2nd semester you predominately have meetings with your research project supervisors instead of structured practicals and lectures for RMS. An average week in semester 1 was having two hour long lectures on Monday, Tuesday & Wednesday morning for the three modules, and a Monday afternoon practical for RMS, with pre-recorded lectures to look at; in the 2nd semester I no longer had the afternoon RMS lectures/ practicals. Performance was assessed with presentations, lab reports and predominately essays, with each module having one assignment, i.e., essay, presentation or lab report, per semester, and end of year exams (essay based) for the 3 modules (RMS had the dissertation/ research project instead of an exam).

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

Because it was during the Covid-19 pandemic, I did not get the chance to go to the campus/ the city that much, but the iBSc is under the Institute of Psychiatry, Psychology & Neuroscience (IoPPN) and is based in the Guy's campus/ hospital.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

I really enjoyed learning about statistics and how to use SPSS, a statistical analysis software and to write up the research project. I have gained very useful insight into medical research and

I am much better at appraising evidence as a result of it. In addition, I really enjoyed learning and practising how to write scientific essays.

**Any downsides?**

The level of support I could get from my supervisor and tutor during the course was restricted because of the pandemic. Considering that I have never written a proper essay let alone a research project, I found it very challenging, and since it was all virtual it was difficult to find support and not become a victim of misunderstandings over email. Everything had to be done online, so my experience intercalating was significantly affected by the pandemic. For example, while at first it was proposed that I would help with recruitment, consenting the participants and coding the data as well, I could only do the statistical analysis of the research project due to the pandemic.

**Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Make sure to read the course structure and information around the course very carefully so you would have a clear idea of what you are enrolling into. Also don't feel pressured to intercalate for points, research papers or publishing and only intercalate if you are motivated and interested in the topic you are intercalating in. Personally, intercalation was a whole new set of challenges that I had never faced, which was very different to what I was told to believe about intercalation; it was not easier and more laid back than medicine and I ended up having to work hard if not harder during my intercalation.

## **SURAJ GANDHI**

BSc in Surgical Design, Technology and Innovation, Imperial College  
London, 2019-20

### **How did you find the application process?**

Getting exam result transcripts and other docs together was a hassle, as was writing a personal statement. Looking back on it though it was all worth it. There was no interview.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

3rd and 4th. I'm glad I did it then because having had a year of clinical experience helped me appreciate the BSc content more, and it meant I was already comfortably back in the clinical headspace by the time I got to final year apprenticeships.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

September to Xmas is lectures on 1) scientific skills like reading papers, designing studies and scientific writing and 2) topics in surgical design/tech/innovation from researchers in those fields. You have 5 monthly controlled assessments which involve different scientific writing tasks e.g. a letter to the editor, a literature review etc. which you have a week to complete. These continue until after Xmas, there are no more lectures after this. You then have 12 weeks for a final research project. 60% of your final grade comes from controlled assessments and 40% from the final project. This structure emphasised learning and being examined on scientific skills rather than being tested on specific pieces of information. This was nice because it forces you to get good at learning new skills which are transferrable to future research endeavours. It also takes the pressure off learning every little detail from the subject specific lectures, so you can engage with the presenters and enjoy their responses rather than taking thorough notes. Having to learn lots of new skills quickly is stressful and it can feel a bit like being thrown into the deep end, especially when your first experience of doing a certain type of writeup is for a summative controlled assessment.

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

Loved the foodie/bar scene in London. There's so much to do, and a surprising amount of it is affordable/free if you look for stuff targeted at students. Imperial has loads of academic/ non-academic student socs which there's plenty of time to get along with. Academic socs often have very cool speakers. Rent is ridiculously expensive. That was the biggest downside for me. Also - it's a big big city and can definitely feel isolated if you don't meet some friends early on/live at home. I was lucky to meet housemates who I really got along with via the intercalators Fb group early on.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

Having the student experience in a completely different setting to the one I was used to.

**Any downsides?**

The extra year before you start working/earning. The high cost of living in London. The course itself was intense and stressful at times, but looking back I don't consider that a downside because it came with a lot of learning and a huge sense of achievement.

**Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Definitely consider spending a year in a different city - adds an element of adventure to the whole experience.

## **MEGHNA RAY**

MSc Biomaterials and Regenerative Medicine, The University of Sheffield, 2019-20

### **How did you find the application process?**

Honestly, pretty lengthy. Throughout the application process I was pretty much in contact with the admissions officer on a daily basis. There was quite a large number of things to clarify both from the medical school and Sheffield University, so this was a bit of a hassle. My department wasn't too familiar with taking on intercalating students, but luckily the team on their end was really helpful and understanding. Also make sure you check for any overlap between term dates with returning to medical school – a lot of master's courses finish after we are expected back on placement.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

3rd–4th. The main reason I chose to intercalate after third year was to be eligible to apply for a master's course, and I chose not to intercalate after fourth year as I wanted to have a more extended clinical time prior to final year. Although I did find it relatively difficult integrating straight back into hospital placements after quite a lengthy break, I don't think that it is something that would have necessarily changed my choice. I had anticipated it would be quite a big change switching from course to course so I think as long as you are prepared then you will be fine. I also think having a year of clinical experience prior to the intercalation was useful in firstly solidifying some of my medical knowledge prior to the break but also in giving me real life experience to apply in my intercalation.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

The first semester of my course was mainly to give us a base understanding of materials science and engineering. The majority of modules in this I honestly found really difficult because I hadn't learnt about any of them before. These all had different assignments throughout the semester with a final exam each in the new year. Keeping to deadlines was quite difficult but once I got a bit more organised it got a lot easier. The year was front loaded, leaving fewer modules in semester two where we began our research project. Unfortunately, my intercalation was during the first lockdown of COVID, so I had less lab time than I was hoping for, but this was where the majority of hands-on research work began. The majority of my time during this semester was spent attending lab meetings and conducting research, alongside lectures for the additional modules.

At the time of the first semester, I remember feeling extremely overwhelmed. However, as I progressed throughout the year, I realised that I was already applying the things I had learnt in the first semester to the new topics. This made me realise the structure of the course made a bit more sense and set me up better for my research project.

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

My course was based in Sheffield which was a really great university to experience being a student in. The campus was brilliant, and the facilities that were available for the department I was in were great. There were a number of societies available to join, both undergraduate and post-graduate a nice variety of options. The city location is also great, being close to the park district makes for nice walks and the university is right in the city centre. Lots of different cities are accessible by train so that means it's easy to get organised day trips to them too.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

My favourite thing was being able to have a whole year in a field that I am really interested in, which I've not been able to spend much time looking into during medical school. It was also really nice to have a change from clinical work and also to experience a different city, meet a different set of people and make new friends.

### **Any downsides?**

I think one of the biggest challenges for me was quick adaptation to the different course itself and then also its assessments. With medical school all our assessment is done at the end of the year but during my intercalation I had to get used to the continuous assignments throughout. My course was also not clinical at all, so it meant I had to quickly pick up a lot of new content. Although it was a challenge, I think this has been really great long term because I got to develop a lot of new skills and be able to look at things from a different perspective.

### **Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Definitely do it if there's something you're genuinely interested in, it's the only opportunity you'll really have to dedicate so much time to it during medical school. But on the other hand, I wouldn't recommend doing it just for the sake of it. It was definitely a challenge and I think it's hard to keep motivated throughout if you aren't interested in it.

## **HELEN SINGLETON**

MSc Clinical Neurology, The University of Sheffield, 2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

I applied for 5 intercalation courses all in different subjects at various universities, so I had quite a few personal statements to write- this did take time, but it allowed me to have options when choosing between offers. Sheffield University were helpful in answering any questions I had during the application process and overall applying was straight forward. I had a Skype interview which was a general chat alongside a few more structured questions. The head of the course and the head administrator interviewed me, and they were both very friendly.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

I intercalated between 3rd and 4th year. I felt as though this was a really good time to intercalate as I had experienced a year of clinical placement which helped me know what to expect during my acute neurology clinical placement. I am now in 4th year of medicine and the transition back has been fairly smooth and I feel I have enough time to catch up on any medicine I may have forgotten during my intercalation year.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

Up until April we had several taught modules which included Neuroanatomy, Neurodegeneration, Neuroinflammation and Diseases of the Peripheral Nervous System and Disorders of Consciousness. Each module had a written exam at the end (usually 6 X 500-word essays which we completed in a 24-hour open book exam) and another type of assessment (e.g., an assessed essay, art project or poster project). Each module counted for 1/6th of our overall master's grade.

Most of the lectures for each module were delivered online (they were supposed to be in person but couldn't be due to COVID restrictions). We had several in person Neuroanatomy sessions where we were taught in small groups using cadavers. We also had weekly sessions online where we talked to patients with neurological conditions (these would normally also be in person) and then opportunities to attend Neurology clinics when restrictions allowed.

From April onwards we had our final projects. This was a choice of a clinical project or a research project. I did clinical project, and you can choose to specialise in whatever area you want to- I specialised in Acute Neurology. This was a 15-week placement where I followed the on-call Neurology team and did lots of clerking of admissions (including stroke). My assessment for this module comprised of a portfolio where I wrote up several patient cases and a mini dissertation (6000 words). I was allowed to choose any subject for my dissertation which interested me. For the research project, there is a list of dissertation titles for you to rank and then these get allocated to you. You then work alongside your

dissertation tutor on your project- this is less time consuming than the clinical project, however, there is less opportunity to take part in clinical medicine with this option. The end assessment for the research project is a 10000-word dissertation.

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

I am originally from Sheffield, so I settled in easily. For people moving to Sheffield just for intercalation it is a great city with lots to do and I would recommend it!

There are lots of bars and clubs along west street and a new area called Kelham Island. There are plenty of places to eat in Sheffield, including lots of independent coffee shops/ restaurants. There are several parks throughout the city, and it is very close to the peak district- these are great places to walk/run/cycle etc.

I lived at home but rent for students is relatively affordable- the student housing market is quite competitive, so the houses are usually nice. Sheffield is also a very safe city, and all the student areas are in nice parts of the city.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

I had time to do other things. I got really into baking and cooking, I learnt Spanish, and I worked at my job twice a week. I only went into placement 3 times a week (and they were fine with that) and for the taught modules there were about 3 hours of lectures each day. Placement was very enjoyable, and I got to see loads of patients with a variety of neurological conditions and I got to know all the on-call doctors- this experience really helped me on my special senses block in 4th year of medicine.

### **Any downsides?**

I wish the lectures were more in person rather than online, however, this was due to COVID, and they would usually be in person.

### **Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Don't do an intercalation unless you enjoy the subject- it is still work and could be pretty boring if you're not that interested!

## **SUSMIT DAS**

MSc in Medical Research, University of Leicester, 2019-20

### **How did you find the application process?**

Fairly straight forward as it is an internal intercalation. Just had to email Phase 2 regarding intention to intercalate. Application was as simple as a form and had to send that to the organisers of the intercalation and you will be accepted. To apply to individual projects, you have to contact specific project leads that are presented to you in a booklet of all projects available. Then you go and do a 'interview' with the leads where they tell you about the project and show you around the department. Once the lead is happy to have you as the student you can inform the intercalation leads and they accept the intercalation.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

3rd and 4th. Found this a great time to intercalate as you have done a full year of clinical studies so you can have a better idea of what sort of intercalation you would like to do. Doing it after 4th year was also on my mind but I did find that when I came back from intercalation a lot of my clinical knowledge was rusty and it took a few months to get back up to speed. I find in final year you do not have this time necessarily to get back up to speed and so am very glad I intercalated after 3rd year.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

September to late February you have 2 days of lectures per week roughly where you are taught 4 modules; Foundations of Applied Health Research, Quantitative research methods, Qualitative research methods and Responsible Research methods. Only the first module was done before Christmas and was very useful in laying down some important foundations that are used in research. After Christmas all the other modules are taught where there are much more specific research methods taught and the assignments are considerably more intense.

Overall, I found the taught components in this course to be excellent in preparing you for the research component to come and also later down the line in your career.

From March to July, you have time to undertake your research project that you signed up with your tutor with. This time is completely free for you with no taught lectures or any other group-based activities. It is what is most exciting about the year as you get to grips with how to perform research and even though can be a steep learning curve, it is well worth it.

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

Stayed in Leicester so nothing new to add – use your free time to go exploring and have fun! Leicester is very central to the UK so you can definitely go traveling to other big cities you want to visit. What was your favourite thing about intercalating? It is so refreshing to be taken away

from the oft rigid timetables we have as medical students. You really get a sense of being independent and have choices to make about what you want to prioritise and use your time for. This is a great test for yourself and definitely will help you later in your career.

### **Any downsides?**

The cost is definitely a downside to intercalating – but with Leicester offering a 20% discount to intercalate internally and rent being quite cheap it's a lot better than a lot of other locations.

### **Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Remember intercalating is not just for the immediate future but can help build fundamental building blocks in becoming a good medical professional. It gives you an opportunity to improve your independence and allows you to experience a completely different side to medicine. There is a lot more to medicine than just the clinical side and it is not something we are exposed to at all so you never know what you could end up finding without giving it a go.

## **ALEX PARKER**

MSc Medical Research, University of Leicester, 2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

Really straightforward! One of the appealing things about applying internally meant that I only had to get approval to intercalate and then fill out an application form which had a word cap of 400 - Therefore it didn't take long at all! It took quite a while to find out what project I had been allocated but I got my first choice so it was alright in the end.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

I went between my 4th and final year, and I wouldn't change it. Personally, I never thought I would intercalate when I started medical school, so when I decided to, I felt as though I'd like to get an MSc rather than a BSc considering they both required the same amount of time out of MBChB. The nice thing about doing it after 4th year was that all my exams that counted to my foundation EPM had been completed. It is a bit intense coming back into final year but they are mostly rotations you've done before so it is all familiar.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

There were 4 taught modules and then the project. You chose your project before you started, and the modules were the same for everyone. Each module was made up of different pieces of coursework but there were no written exams! The project module had the greatest weighting for the overall mark and the dissertation made up the majority of this module. All of the taught modules were done by March so you can just focus on the dissertation after that.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

Just getting to do something a bit different. Intercalation is still intense but it's completely different to medicine in that you can work when you like rather than be structured to attend placement at certain times. It was also nice to be able to dedicate some time to looking into an area of medicine you're actually interested in and not have to cram it into everything else you have to achieve day to day on medicine.

### **Any downsides?**

The hardest part for me, has been entering into a new year and finding most of my original year group friends have now graduated and moved away. Obviously I knew this was going to happen but it's hard when most of your support network is now working and in a new part of the country. I think this is definitely an upside of intercalating earlier on as you get to know your new year group for longer.

## **HANNAH WRIGHT**

MSc in Women and Children's Health, King's College London, 2020-21

### **How did you find the application process?**

It was relatively straightforward, just needed an up-to-date CV and a couple of references which I easily got from my phase 1 and 2 tutors at the med school. The hardest part (or most time consuming) was writing a personal statement. There was no interview, so it was just a matter of filling out the online application form and attaching the references and personal statement.

### **Between which years did you intercalate and how did you find this?**

Between years 4 and 5. It was daunting initially coming back into final year feeling so out of the clinical side of things but there was a simulation session for returning intercalators that is good and there are others in the same position so that helps with any anxiety. I feel like it was good intercalating at this point because all your speciality rotations are completed during 4th year and this for me is when I realised which specialities I was interested in for the future.

### **Please briefly outline the structure of your course. How did you find this?**

September to December was purely taught modules, one module introducing us to current research going on in the department, an optional module and then a research methods and statistics module. This part of the year was assessed with essays and presentations and then one exam after Christmas for the statistics part of the course. From January to April there were two taught modules, one optional and another that introduced scientific skills and methods used in research including how research grants work. This again had essays and verbal presentations for its assessment. Both optional modules had exams during May/June. The research project part of the course began in January and wasn't submitted until the end of August and included a 12,000-word written dissertation and a presentation. You had choice of what you wanted to do for your research project and even could come up with your own idea, which is what I did, for this part of the course.

### **How did you find the new university/city (if outside of Leicester)?**

Unfortunately, due to covid, my course ended up being all remote, except that I had the opportunity to attend clinics with my dissertation supervisor. Because of that I don't really feel I had a great experience of getting to explore London, but this wouldn't be the case for future year groups.

### **What was your favourite thing about intercalating?**

My favourite thing about intercalating has been the chance to get to experience a non-medical school university experience.

**Any downsides?**

Seeing your friends who don't intercalate graduate a year before you and not having the same support network when you come back because they have left.

**Any other advice for prospective intercalators?**

Make the decision wisely, if you know you have an area/specialty you are particularly interested in this could be a great opportunity to explore that more.