

PATH3208: ePortfolio Summary

PATH3208: Cancer Sciences has been the most unique course that I have experienced during my undergraduate degree at the University of New South Wales. This course offered a combination of lectures, small and large group tutorials and co-curricular classes that have enhanced my understanding of cancer sciences and how it will be relevant for my future as an Honours student next year and as a Doctor in the near-future. Furthermore, the assessments in this course, particularly the group work has increased my communication and collaborative skills, which will be largely beneficial for my future pursuits.

The lectures in this course have provided me with a deep understanding of cancer sciences. The lectures have covered a wide-range of topics, which includes lectures based on the different types of cancer, pathways involved in cancer, laboratory and diagnostic techniques as well as treatment strategies. The diverse nature of the lectures and guest lecturers has made this course unique and intriguing. I thoroughly enjoyed the treatment component of the lectures particularly the cancer surgery lecture and this may be due to the fact that surgery itself fascinates me and this makes me wonder whether I should aim to be a surgeon in the future. From the lectures given I did have some trouble grasping some of the research method and lab techniques that were addressed in a few lectures. I had a lot of trouble understanding the common lab techniques lecture, as there were many slides with a lot of new information on them. I also had difficulty interpreting the lecture slides from the targeted and anti-metabolic cancer therapies lecture because of the overflowing content.

Early in the course, I noticed that some of the lectures particularly the lectures on the different types of cancers such as colorectal cancer were very similar to the lectures given in PATH3206-Cancer Pathology. However, I did notice that while the lectures were similar the focus was different. PATH3206 focused more on the aetiology and the pathogenesis of cancer while PATH3208 focused on the diagnosis and treatment & together they have given me a more comprehensive understanding of the study of cancer sciences. Although I must point out that the pancreatic cancer lecture was exactly the same lecture given in PATH3205-molecular basis of inflammation and infection. Overall the lectures have been extremely enjoyable, as they have increased my knowledge and understanding of cancer.

Both the small group and the large-group tutorials have been a great experience and have significantly helped complete the assessments in this course. Dr. Caroline Ford taught the small-group tutorials in our research group. Being an established scientist at the Lowy Cancer Research institute, Dr. Ford is an excellent tutor as she has first-hand experience of what it is to be a researcher. It was as if Dr. Ford was our research supervisor and this is extremely beneficial for the future especially when I undertake Honours project next year with a research supervisor that will probably be someone like Dr. Ford. She effectively guided us on how to write a critical summary of a research paper, literature review and how to present our research to a critical audience. The final tutorial on experiencing a real research group meeting was a fascinating experience as it... Furthermore having these tutorials with my fellow team-members has helped keep up with our group work.

Similarly, the large-group tutorials were also a great learning experience, which also helped me complete the assessments. Associate Professor Yang taught the large-group tutorials, which were mainly based on career-development learning. Not only did these tutorials help me complete the assignments in this course but they also helped me develop a deeper understanding of employability, which is essential for

the future. These tutorials helped me write a resume and cover letter for a job. This was extremely beneficial as I realised that I had many faults and errors in my current resume. The next tutorial was based on how to prepare for and perform in a job interview. By providing us with situation examples, A/Professor Yang guided us on what employers look for in a potential employee and how to succeed in answering interview questions. The tutorial this week was based on the Resume and Cover Letter task. This tutorial was very helpful for the future, as we learnt how to stand out from other applicants that are applying for the same job. This was valuable knowledge that I will use to help me find a job and get employed.

The Co-curricular classes are unique to this course as it provides us a glimpse of what it would be like to be a scientist working in a lab. The co-curricular classes complement the lectures given in the course. They are very informative visits to the lab, particularly to the Lowy Research Centre and I have really enjoyed these experiences. By visiting the different laboratories including basic research and clinical research labs, I have gained a greater understanding of cancer research. The most enjoyable aspects to the co-curricular classes were the visits to the cancer treatment facilities at the Prince of Wales Hospital-and this reaffirms my goal of becoming a doctor. I was unfortunate to miss the Surgery for cancer class and this is what I regret the most. However, I did visit the Radiation and Imaging class, which was a very interesting experience as it provided an insight of radiotherapy in the treatment of cancer. Understanding the scientific principles behind the equipment and techniques were a bit challenging. Overall these co-curricular classes were an interesting experience as it provided an insight into the life of a real scientist.

The assessments in this course were quite difficult, particularly the literature review and the presentation. This course tested our group work abilities. The literature review was perhaps the most difficult assignment I have faced throughout my degree. I also believe that doing the literature review as a team was more difficult as we all had different styles of research and writing and as a result the overall product didn't flow too well. Regardless of that, I did enjoy working in a group. I don't think I would've been able to come up with what we had on my own. And without my supportive team members, I don't think I would have completed the literature review to a high standard. I was fortunate enough to be organised into a group with some friends. My team members were not just colleagues, they are my friends and I can't let my friends down and that is why I tried my best to complete this task to a high standard. The presentation was a challenge for me because I have a fear of public speaking. Although with a lot of support from my fellow team members, I was encouraged to actively participate in the presentation. Initially this made me nervous however, I am very glad I did speak because in a way I did get over my fear a little bit. It wasn't as scary presenting as I thought it would be and perhaps this is because there were not many people in the lecture theatre that day. Ultimately, I was very happy with our effort.

The assessable quizzes were a very effective method of encapsulating the content of this course. I did enjoy studying for these quizzes and I do feel as though they challenged me. They were not easy questions and they were quite tricky at times. However, I do wish there were more quizzes in this course. I feel as though four was not enough for me to understand the entire course. I also found it very difficult to score well in. Each quiz did take me a considerable amount of time and with no time limit, it made it much easier to do well. However, I do believe that if a time limit were set, it would make it more challenging and it would force us to study more instead of just searching the answers on Google. The questions that were tested in the quizzes were similar to the structure as seen in the final examination. I found the final exam

for this course extremely difficult. I also believe that perhaps multiple-choice is not the best method to assess a student on the knowledge of this course. Instead, a short-answer written examination with no multiple-choice would be more beneficial as it would allow us reflect on each lecture with our own interpretation.

Ultimately, PATH3208 has been a unique course in which I have learned a lot and not just about cancer science but how to prepare for my future career. This course has given me an insight of what it would be like to be a scientist. It has taught me valuable skills that I will need for Honours and most importantly for my career goal as a doctor. I do intend to embark upon my goal and this course has made me believe that I can do it. It is possible; I just need to work harder and I will.