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Northumbria anatomist returns to learning

An anatomy demonstrator from Northumbria University is switching from teacher to scholar after signing up to the University's unique new degree programme.

As an employee of Northumbria University, Stephen Boddy explains the inner workings of the human body to student doctors and school children every day, but he is now also studying for his own degree, having started the new MSc Public Engagement with Science course.

The course – the first of its kind in the UK – was launched this year as one outcome of a partnership between Northumbria University and the International Centre for Life. Stephen is one of the first cohorts of students on the new programme, which began in September.

MSc Public Engagement with Science is a hands-on programme that teaches science graduates to translate complex science into ways that the public can easily understand. Students on the course engage with theory as well as organising cultural activities and public outreach events.

Delivered by experts at both institutions, the course enables Stephen and fellow students to benefit from the teaching of university academics and expertise of professional staff at the International Centre for Life. The programme also includes work placements as well as access to the science centre's facilities.

This summer Stephen has worked with the International Centre for Life as an anatomist in residence during the world-famous Body Worlds Vital exhibition, which has proved so popular with the public that its run has been extended until the end of November.

Although already well experienced in sharing anatomical information and theory with the public, he says that the MSc programme is helping him to understand the theory behind his day job.

“I chose this degree because I think it will give me a much wider skill set and I wanted to do something that will benefit my employer,” Stephen said. “I have a lot of experience in demonstrating anatomy but this course is giving me a more sound understanding of the theory involved.

“Public engagement and widening the impact that science activities have on the wider society is becoming more and more important.”

The MSc Public Engagement with Science degree offers unrivalled professional development opportunities. Employment opportunities are diverse and graduates are expected to be in demand in both the private and public sector in areas including community outreach, clinical research and consultancy, educational information officers and in a range of workplaces such as science centres, research councils, academic institutions and health-

related charities.

Stephen, who has chosen to study the degree part-time, added: “I chose this programme because it is unique to Northumbria and has been structured around both theoretical and practical components.

“Industry experts will be coming in to talk about the practical aspects of their work. We will have the head of the BMJ scientific journal and also Ben Acre, the journalist who writes the ‘Bad Science’ newspaper column. He will show us how he dissects scientific papers to cut through the media exaggeration of scientific advances and establish the facts.”

The degree, which can be studied full- or part-time, is aimed at graduates from most science disciplines who have the ability and desire to communicate science to the public.

For more information, email carole.l.marshall@northumbria.ac.uk or visit www.northumbria.ac.uk.

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