

Professional Certification VS Masters Degree: Complementary Career Routes

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Test 193



Department of medical biochemistry Diakonhjemmet hospital

- Total 40 employees, mostly BLS's
- In addition we have a 50% in position as specialist in medical biochemistry
- 1.600 000 million analyses per year, mainly in clinical chemistry, haematology, urine and coagulation
- We have also developed skills within morphology (blood, urine)
- A city hospital for 130 000 inhabitants and a regional hospital for rheumatology

Quality policy and quality goals at the department of medical biochemistry, Diakonhjemmet hospital

- Our Department wants to be a centre of excellence in medical biochemistry
- We seek at all time to provide good service by having a representative analysis repertoire that are relevant to the hospitals needs
- We want highly qualified employees who are good collaborators for other professions in the hospital
- We need trained personnel who can guide other professions
- We strive to meet the present and future skills requirements in the laboratory
- Our Department seeks at all times to have at least one BLS in continuing education, either to professional certification and/or relevant master's degree
- This requires concrete annual plans for individual professional development

After introduction of these goals we have achieved during the last seven years:

- Six professional certification of BLS's
 - Two in haematology
 - One in morphology (urine microscopy)
 - One in ethics
 - One in statistics
 - One in quality work
 - One will submit application for professional certification (morphology) in April 2015
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- In addition
 - One master degree in molecular cell biology
 - One master degree in management
 - One master degree in medical biochemistry
 - One master degree in medical biochemistry 2015

What do we want to achieve with continuing Education?

- satisfied
- motivated
- interested
- curious
- Skilled and Proud employees
- Retaining employees

- Equal partners to other professions in the hospital
- Increases the Department's reputation
- And we need the competence to be a centre of excellence in medical biochemistry

Professional certification or master's degree?

- There are divided opinions among BLS's and managers about what is most relevant, master's or professional certification
- More opportunities will result in more BLS's to continuing education
- Some BLS's hesitating to enter a master's program
- Professional certification may be a more realistic option

Professional certification (PC)

- The Specialists Approval is prepared by BFI (The Norwegian Institute of Biomedical Science)
- Appointed specialist committee, by the board of BFI, are assessing and approving the applications
- Documentation of professional competence and skills
- Provides documentation that candidates have necessary theoretical knowledge and practical skills within their particular professional field
- PC is equivalent to advanced studies above the level required for a bachelor degree
- The program is designed to suit the specific competency requirement of each candidate and his/her respective workplace

To achieve the title biomedical laboratory scientist with specialist certification there are general criteria :

- Authorized as a BLS in Norway
- Three years specialized professional practice
- Further education (min. 30 ECTS)
- Upgrading (min. 100 hours)
- Written and oral presentations (min. 100 point BFI system)
- Written paper/dissertation (10-20 pages)
- Certification must be renewed every five years (criteria for renewal)

Professional certification/ advantages

- Can be implemented with relatively few resources
- Suited to meet the workplace's need for expertise
- PC is located at the master's level
- The courses in the PC-program can later be used and incorporated into a master's degree
- Professional certification will thus help ensure high professional standards in the workplace
- BLS's with professional certification can for example supervise students, doctors and other health personnel within their specialty and create enthusiasm within their specialist field
- The most important is skills development, not job title
- Most hospitals in Norway have approved a pay rise after approved application

Master's degree

- International standards (120 credits)
- Today follows most master programs a predetermined and relatively fixed pattern
- In Norway there are several colleges and universities that offer master's degrees in molecular biology, cell biology and medical genetics
- Few customized master's degrees in more common laboratory subjects, as for example medical biochemistry, haematology and morphology
- BLS's with a master's degree have acquired valuable expertise, extended critical and academic thinking

Future challenges

- Universities and colleges that offers BLS's science programs in Norway should work together to ensure that there is quality, relevant and diverse continuing educations and master's degrees
- Online courses and / or modules will contribute to higher availability, regardless of geographic location
- Master's programs should be more flexible and customized (courses from PC)
- Allow to combine courses from universities and colleges
- Customize master's degrees to meet the needs of the workplace for competence
- Workplaces must take responsibility for reporting relevant issues at master's degree level
- It is important that managers see the benefit in investing in both PC and master's degrees

Career routes

- BLS's with professional certification and master's degree may have equal career opportunities such as head of analysis section, quality management, training, education, sensor etc.
- BLS's with PC have achieved skills adapted to the workplace
- A BLS with PC often continue in his previous job without changed responsibilities or job title but with a focus on utilizing professional knowledge acquired through specialization
- BLS with a master's degree have a higher academic degree
- With the ability to customize the master's degree within the common laboratory subjects this demands attractive BLS's
- Again I want to repeat that it is not the job title, but academically challenges, more interest in the daily work, curiosity and professional development that is the most important

What will I choose when I employ BLS's, a BLS with master's degree or with professional certification?

- It will always depend on the skills I need in the department
- If in the near future will be more opportunities to customize master's degrees better than today, I think that this will be a highly demanded group among BLS's

This is Heidi

She has both a professional certification in urine morphology and a master degree in cell biology



My professional certification have directly caused:

- Increase my own and others' focus and expertise on morphological analysis
- Training of all medical doctors in the blood smear and urine microscopy
- Published articles on the morphology
- Held lectures, courses (internal / external,) posters
- Increased job satisfaction
- Create urine micro-app!

Poster award at the World Congress in Berlin

ated to people

