

My name is Martin and at almost 60 years of age I am a mature age, very mature age, student studying a Bachelor of Exercise Physiology at the University of Canberra. I have held careers in policing, corruption investigation, people smuggling investigation, compliance and fraud investigations and education in the Commonwealth Public Service.

I have always had an interest in sport and helping people, and when I was young held dreams of working in physiotherapy or other health science but lacked commitment. Now, after almost 40 years of public service I'm seeking a career change and want to realise my childhood dream.

I was scheduled to commence my studies (part-time) in 2019, but severe trauma from an incident in my policing career reared its ugly head and put a stop to that. It also impacted my capacity to work and I went on long-term leave. Fortunately, 2020 has seen me in a much better state of mental health and ready to commence my studies and attempt a return to work.

Dipping my toe in the study pool I elected to only tackle one subject per semester to get a feel for how I coped. Of course, little was I to know the additional challenges 2020 was going to throw up.

First coronavirus hit impacting my work environment and requiring everyone to work from home. Then COVID impacted study and towards the end of semester 1 I and most others had to move to online learning.

I had elected to study Regional Anatomy first semester and delivering and attending lab pracs in an online environment was testing for the teaching staff and students. To add to my challenges a parent died close to semester 1 exam time. I experienced the trial of having to seek an extension, which teaching staff generously granted, and I'm pleased to say that I passed the subject.

Second semester has me better positioned to undertake the challenges presented. As a mature age student (I can be carbon dated to somewhere around the Jurassic) trying to fit in with a much younger demographic, many students are younger than my children, has been a difficult and lonely experience. When I attended my first lecture, I duly took out my notebook and pen only to see everyone else taking out laptops. Like I said, I'm a dinosaur. Despite this I find it an invigorating experience. UC is a wonderful institution successfully combining a collegiate atmosphere with a social vibe.

Combining part-time study with full-time employment means it will take me eight years to complete my degree. Perfect timing with my retirement from public service. Here's to a new career and many years of community service.