

ENHANCING THE QUALITY OF STUDENT SUPPORT:

Student mentors using Moodle to support new students

The delivery of Health science courses often involves the dissemination of complex theoretical ideas and terminology. Practical demonstration/experimentation studies have repeatedly been shown to improve student progression and continuity of learning within the discipline of science (Braund and Driver, 2005) as well as reinforcing theoretical aspects of the associated topic (Rico and Shulman, 2004).

Higher levels of thought involving explanation and argumentation have been recognised as potential vehicles for conceptual understanding. Although the role of dialogue in learning has received much attention, the problem of creating situations in which students engage in epistemic dialogue is apparent. The activities proposed to students, and the role of Information Communication Technology (ICT) can help to create epistemic dialogues, as well as providing extrinsic motivation (De Vries *et al.*, 2002).

There is growing evidence to support kinaesthetic delivery to reinforce the theoretical aspects contained within Health science subjects (Looi and Ang, 2001, Kearney 2000, Lynch and Ndyetabura, 2006).

There is also clear evidence of a slow pedagogical evolution towards using ICT to enhance science based sessions (Hennessy *et al.*, 2005). There is however resistance to using innovative pedagogical approaches, due to various reasons. Common arguments include; lack of time, overloaded Health sciences syllabi and lack of skills/training of the staff and students (Barton 2004, Hennessy *et al.*, 2005).

Physiology Drop in Centre

Students in the advanced stages of their training (BSc nursing in years 2 and 3) from the different fields of nursing have helped to create as well as facilitate the development of physiological resources.



Figure 1. PDIC Student Mentors

These resources have been used to facilitate a physiology drop in centre for students to access who need extra help with physiology. The resources comprise of various enquiry-based activities, including session's aims and learning objectives, detailed activities for the session, and a plenary for the session leaders or facilitators to go through with the students. These resources have been made available via an easy to use Moodle page.



Figure 2. Physiology resource home page

Students accessing the drop in centre have used the Moodle scheduler to sign up to a variety of student led sessions. Students have been able to identify which area of physiology they need help with, and are able to check the availability of the session via the drop in centre link (Figure 2) which takes them to the page below (Figure 3).

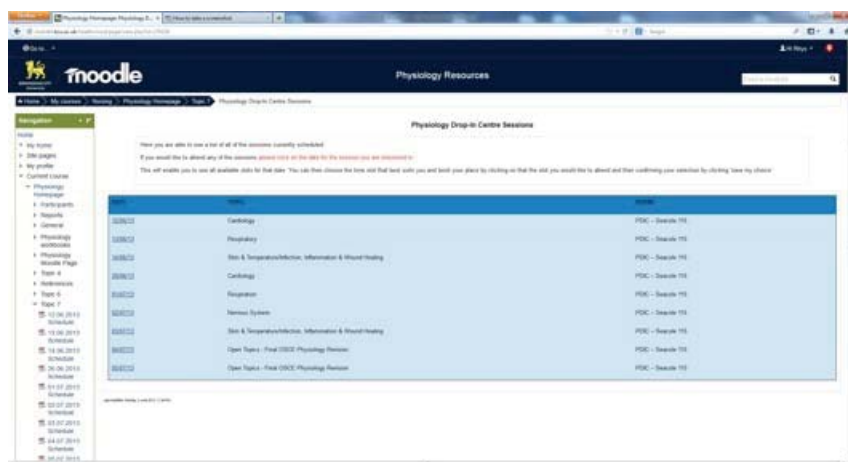


Figure 3. PDIC Session booking page overview

Students and student mentors are able to see if the tutorial sessions are at capacity (Figure 4), enabling students to decide whether they would like to join a session that has fewer participants for example. Session facilitators can also modify delivery depending on how busy each of the sessions are. In addition, they can ascertain staffing issues, i.e. whether there are enough facilitators present.



Figure 4. PDIC Session booking page

Feedback

Several of the student mentors commented on the value of using the Moodle scheduler:

“The Moodle page, especially the booking system, was invaluable for planning the logistics for each session. As it allowed mentors to plan and facilitate for group sizes.” Second year BSc Nursing student – PDIC student mentor.

“Using the Moodle Scheduler enabled easy access of the mentor’s availability for each date, which allowed us to be flexible in our working day. This was particularly important when considering we are all at varying levels of our training, some with assignments to prioritise and others with placement commitments.” Second year BSc Nursing student – PDIC student mentor.

Students using the PDIC generally commented on how helpful the student mentors were, and the usefulness of having a Moodle site, with all the relevant resources available to access:

“Used good materials and useful explanations, which were all backed up on the Moodle page”

“The notes they had were easy to understand and follow up. They made them so interesting to follow”

“Signing up to the sessions were easy to do”

Application for Academic Staff

Using the Moodle Scheduler has many applications for academic staff from all disciplines, whether they are student or staff led. Session booked can be access and reviewed by both student and staff, to check

topics covered, as well as checking to see who else was present to potentially enquire as to what was covered.

The webpage has guest access so please feel free to take a look:

Physiology resources for the PDIC - <http://bit.ly/1euuccA>

Any queries drop me an email: Rhys.jones@bcu.ac.uk