

CASE STUDY

Leicester Medical School students go online to advance digital professionalism

A Virtual College Case Study



UNIVERSITY OF
LEICESTER



“ Not many medical students in the UK are getting similar social media professionalism training. ”

The background

The University of Leicester is ranked in the top one per cent of universities in the world by the Times Higher Education.

Its Medical School celebrated its 40th anniversary in 2016 and has recently completed a £42 million build of state of the art facilities.

The way in which Healthcare Practitioners work is changing and Leicester Medical School strives to make everything clinically-relevant whilst incorporating new technologies. For example, the Medical School is the first in the UK to equip each new pre-clinical-phase student with a free iPad.

The challenge

Medicine is obviously a sensitive issue with patient confidentiality of utmost importance.

It is crucial that workers in the sector are aware of the ramifications of how and to whom they talk about their work.

In practice, the lines between private and professional lives are becoming blurred by digital and social media. The General Medical Council publishes guidance which students must read and agree to adhere to, but they might not envision the different practical implications of this guidance.

Terese Bird, Educational Designer at the University of Leicester, commented: “As the pitfalls are easy to fall into, some students err on the side of caution by closing down from social media altogether or they just use it personally but not professionally.”

There are, however, huge potential benefits which can be realised by using digital communication appropriately within the medical profession. For example, it can be used as a way of tapping into the experience of a doctor who, in the past, has come across rare patient symptoms.

“The GMC stresses that its official guidelines recognise the potential professional benefits of using social media appropriately and we wanted our medical students to be aware of the positives as well,” explained Terese.

The solution

In April 2015, the Medical School first engaged with Virtual College about its interactive ‘Managing your Professional Digital Profile’ online resources.

These have been created in conjunction with subject matter expert, Bernadette John, previously Digital Professionalism Lead for Kings College London.

The course incorporates fictional case studies to illustrate how individuals can make the most of digital and social media without risk to themselves or their organisation. The online course provides an opportunity to question and encourages thinking, interaction and engagement.

Leicester Medical School bought licences in June 2015 to enable it to provide the course to its students.

“Within medicine, it has always been important to track and provide proof. The university needs to know that it has done its duty in making students aware of digital professionalism and can provide reports, if necessary,” said Terese.

“ E-learning can provide a rapid and cost effective solution for us. ”



The results

Within 4 months, virtually all of Leicester Medical School's year one, two and three students had taken the online 'Managing your Professional Digital Profile' course.

Terese commented: "It was easy to give students access to the resources via the learning management system."

"I could see who had completed the course and nudge the few who hadn't."

"As far as I am aware not many medical students in the UK are getting similar social media professionalism training."

"All of our students have iPads, and their learning material is all formatted for study on iPads, including apps they use in class such as for quizzes and interactivity between lecturer and student."

"The Virtual College course was perfect in that the material was written by a medical staff instructor, the software is interactive and engaging and runs nicely on iPads, and plus I have access to the data to check students' engagement."

"It would be costly to offer this learning content on a face to face basis, and costly for me to try and build something similar, and it would be difficult to get the time on the curriculum to cover this by traditional methods."

"For topics like this, in particular, e-learning can provide a rapid and cost effective solution for us, which is more likely to deliver engagement and retention. I like the fact that the course gives students an opportunity for feedback."

"Use of e-learning within the Medical School is only going to grow in the future."



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About Virtual College

With over 2 million online learners, Virtual College is one of the leading providers of e-learning in the UK. For over twenty years, we have provided online courses to individuals and companies across the world, breaking down the boundaries of traditional learning to deliver cost reducing, time efficient training. Unlike many other e-learning providers, our training extends to actual programme and qualification creation and delivery - resulting in a unique blended solution. The knowledge, experience and feedback that this delivery provides helps ensure that we strive to continually improve our solutions.

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