



West Midlands Education Innovation and Notable Practice

ON LINE EDUCATION FOR SPECIALISTS

2010 - 2013



ON LINE EDUCATION FOR SPECIALISTS

BIRMINGHAM CITY UNIVERSITY

Overview:	An on line accredited module was designed for Health and Social Care Professionals working as Specialists whose jobs could be at risk which would also enable them to study at their convenience.
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I designed an innovative on line course for Specialist Health and Social Care workers (or those working towards this level) which the student could access in a time that was convenient to both them and their work place. The material and activities within the programme would enable them to both effectively understand, discuss, evaluate and to actively prove their worth as well as undertake projects which would improve quality of patient care.

The online software used is called 'MOODLE' which is a virtual learning environment. Students apply from all parts of the West Midlands and beyond so there are many stakeholders involved. It has also seen 3 charities (MS, MND and Parkinson's UK) involved who part fund some of the students undertaking the course.

Each week I open a forum, pose a question and encourage the students to respond, I try to be controversial to whip up a bit of a debate! They can get quite heated at times and this results in more and more from the students.

Short term impact: Student evaluations were excellent with comments such as *"I now have a clearer understanding of a specialist practitioner's role and this will enable me to articulate my role with confidence to managers/commissioners in the future"* and *"The political awareness module has sparked a new interest as I have 'avoided' this in the past but now I am seeking information to keep abreast of the latest political news"*

Long term impact:

Students found studying on line motivating. *"Being back in the academic arena where searching for evidence, essay writing, project work are a now part of every week"*.

The students are required to plan an audit. The impact will be achieved as the students carry them out. All the projects were unique and demonstrate that the students innovation. The results of the audit. These have significant potential benefits. *"I have presented my audit plans at the Regional Link Therapy Day and so I am now committed! I would not have thought of presenting it if it had not been for the course I am looking forward to starting my audit!"*.

Key Obstacles and ways of overcoming them:

- After the first pilot; generally the students loved the content but found the site overwhelming and difficult to navigate. A further software tool called 'WIMBA' was added, this enabled the student to be presented with a more simplified site, with the same content. The students are also only presented with new work on a weekly basis.
- Online enrolling has been an issue, but recent key changes in the university have made this more straightforward. I do still have to manage the enrolments alot myself, but on a positive note this means I have had the opportunity to speak to each student before the module begins.
- My passion in this module meant that I could ask the students to carry out far too much work. So now within each weeks work there are 'essential' and 'desirable' activities for them to carry out. This provides the student with flexibility and enables them to manage their time, and studies effectively.
- The students worried they would lose out on the social side of studying; there is now a 'coffee room forum' where the more social side of life can be discussed and people can have a bit of a laugh with each other! I think sometimes the students share more on line than they would if they were in the classroom, the students all get on well and the last group (and myself) keep in touch in the future via 'Facebook' which has been fabulous.
- The provision of 'chat rooms' at various points in the course has helped key questions and worries, in particular those around the assignment. I provide these in the evening so all can attend.

The next course will begin on Monday 23 June 2014.