

Innovation in the online learning space: A new way of teaching diabetes to clinicians

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Context

The Graduate Certificate of Diabetes Education is an online course offered over 1 year educating nurses and allied health professionals from all over Australia. The course is the first step toward credentialing as an Diabetes Educator in Australia.



We redesigned the curriculum for delivery through a MOOC platform designed around a social model of learning.

Objectives

We set out to redesign the course using an intuitive online learning platform from the UK, FutureLearn.

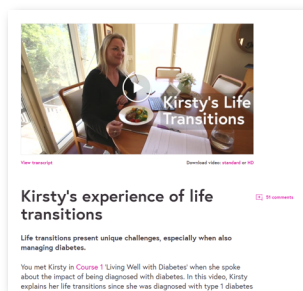
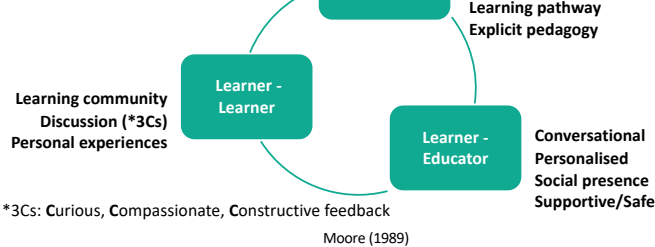
Our aim was to create a course that:

- is more interactive, engaging with a clear learning pathway;
- provides a collaborative learning environment;
- is relevant to contemporary practice;
- actively puts students at the centre of their learning; and
- improves access & flexibility for students so they can study when and where they prefer, fitting in to their busy work and home schedules.

How did we do it?

- **Good learning design** – front loading with significant time and resources into designing each learning step
- **Learning through discussion** – facilitated discussion that enabled learners to express, check and consolidate ideas; that shifts ways of thinking, and leads to more elaborate understanding
- **Digital storytelling** – ability to hold attention and engage students in an authentic story was central; combining expertise of educators and video production team
- **What students do** – students learning activities at each step of the way to investigate, read, produce, explore, watch, discuss, practise, reflect, evaluate

Encouraged online interactions



Outcomes

- Student were more engaged with the course than previously, evidenced by their comments in online discussions increasing from an average of 300 comments per unit to over 4000.
- Evidence of reflective practice through online discussions and interactions between learners and between learners and educators that developed into a supportive community of practice.
- Student learning was highly visible as demonstrated through their online discussions.
- Students reflected on applying new knowledge and practicing new skills in their clinical work.
- Students felt less isolated.
- Unit completion rate has risen – e.g. 63% in 2016 to 98% completion in 2017

The opportunity to communicate with class participants and the lead lecturer ... [means I] feel more connected, less anonymous and more engaged in the course. The presentation of the course work has communicated to me it can be addressed in manageable chunks ... The opportunity to read other[s] responses and respond has allowed me to consider a variety of experiences and ... widen[ing] my scope of thought about the topic... (Student)

Through their engagement with other learners and educators we have seen the progress in student learning, evidence of reflective practice and development of a community of practice

What we learned

- Not only did we transform curriculum, we also transformed ourselves and the way we understand online learning and teaching.
- You can engage health professionals in online learning.
- Good planning and learning design based on sound pedagogy is critical.
- Engaging consumers and health professionals in development of content improves learning experiences.
- Such transformation required a collaborative multidisciplinary team (educators and highly skilled learning design and production experts).

Our course provides an exemplar for innovative, intuitive and collaborative learning for health professionals

Frontloading designing for learning (Beetham & Sharpe, 2013): increasingly necessary to cope with pressures on staff and resources (Goodyear, 2015).



Tell students which transferable skills they are developing, highlight links within curriculum and provide rationale for activities.

Students share their experiences and extend their learning through posting and responding to comments in an online discussion.



The course has been redesigned consistent with models of social learning focusing on interactive and collaborative learning.

Students learn complex concepts through narratives relevant to their clinical practice, represented in high quality and powerful audio-visual materials.



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References

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See our course at <https://www.futurelearn.com/degrees/deakin-university/diabetes-education>