

IT SKILLS PATHWAY

LEVEL THREE

LEVEL TWO

LEVEL ONE

ENTRY

University Case Study



Using the NHS IT Skills Pathway in Health and Social Care Education

A year ago, the IT Skills Development Team at DH Informatics contacted a large number of Universities in the UK to let them know about the NHS IT Skills Pathway. The letter detailed how the Pathway could assist their health and social care students obtain the recognised standard for IT skills that would prepare them for work in the healthcare sector.

This case study highlights the experiences of a few of the universities that have started to implement the IT Skills Pathway in their curricula and the subsequent benefits that have been realised.

Implementing the Pathway

Each of the universities has gone about implementing the Pathway into their curricula in different ways.

Using their existing Virtual Learning Environment (VLE), Liverpool have broken down the entry level course into bite size chunks and allocated one section for 9-10 weeks of the students first term.

Teesside have used Blackboard to deploy customised courses with names appropriate to the learners that will undertake the courses such as "IT skills for Dentistry". Barbara described this as "...a gentle way to roll out the courses. We want the IT to be an

enabler for their work, not to be seen as the end result in itself" Using customised courses also means that they can more easily track student's progress by their university course.

Using a Moodle site, Portsmouth have been able to provide links to all of the courses in one place and allowed students to self register for the appropriate courses. Jason explained "We've also integrated the Pathway into existing course units. For example, where a course already had a unit about IT and communications then we've replaced the IT with the Pathway. In other cases we've made it part of the unit e.g. Study Skills"

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Why use the Pathway?

Stuart explains “At Liverpool we were in the process of developing a new module around IT when I found out about the IT Skills Pathway so the timing was perfect. The ability to distribute the appropriate course content which our students can then remotely access gives them a high degree of flexibility as to when and how they learn.”

The need to supply patients with better information is a key driver for Teesside. John explains “All our students are now going to workplaces where computer use is essential. Patients need and require better information and it’s our job to ensure that we are preparing a future workforce that has the skills to respond to this. We see the technology as the “third person” in the room and the IT Skills Pathway gives us assurance that students are going to the workplace armed with the appropriate IT skills”

Employability is also a key factor for Portsmouth as Jason explains “Our students are undertaking our courses because they want employment or because they wish to further their existing career. Giving them access to NHS approved courses such as the IT Skills Pathway will hopefully increase their chances.”

What are students saying?

It’s still early days for any formal evaluation from students as many are still accessing the learning materials. However, initial reactions are positive. Students at Teesside have commented on how flexible the learning is – being able to learn at their own pace and where they choose. Students at Liverpool echo this stating they have enjoyed being able to learn at their own pace without feeling potentially intimidated by other learners with higher IT skill levels.

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Future Plans?

Following full evaluations at the end of this academic year, all of the featured universities are planning to expand use of the IT Skills Pathway to more courses and students for the subsequent year. Jason and the team at Portsmouth are planning to meet with course leaders to further embed the Pathway in programmes whilst Stuart is planning to introduce Level 1 courses that link with other course modules at Liverpool such as using PowerPoint as part their Presentations unit.

Barbara and John at Teesside are planning to build on the success of the initial small groups of learners to expand use of the Pathway to larger course groups. Barbara explained “We want to eventually introduce all levels of the Pathway to all our students and we’re discussing with subject leaders how to do this. Our aim is that all our students leave their courses digitally literate and competent for their future work”



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About the Universities

Dr Stuart Mackay is a senior lecturer in the Directorate of Medical Imaging and Radiotherapy at the University of Liverpool. So far, they have around 80 students utilising the IT Skills Pathway.



Jason Oakley, Emma Coppins and Sarah Cooper are from the University of Portsmouth Science Faculty and School of Health Sciences and Social Work. They have made the IT Skills Pathway available to a wide range of courses and students with 1st year students their priority.



John Waine and Barbara Wilford are from Teesside University. They have over 250 students from a variety of health and social care courses accessing the training.

The NHS IT Skills Pathway covers the full range of competencies for users of IT, from basic through to advanced levels. It has been developed in partnership with the NHS to provide an officially recognised route of learning and certification for the whole workforce.

Its purpose is to encourage everyone working within the NHS to review their current IT skills and knowledge against the national standards, determine what their skill gaps are and then identify their future training requirements based on the products that are available.

For more information about the NHS IT Skills Pathway, please visit our website at:

<http://www.itskills.nhs.uk>

Alternatively you can email us at: it.skills@nhs.net