

Poster presentation

“I haven’t studied for twenty years and now I have to do it online”: Online orientation for postgraduate students in veterinary science

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It is not a new thought that good induction and orientation in Higher Education, prepared in a targeted and supported way, enables improved student socialisation and retention (McNickle, 1999; Bozarth, 2004; Salmon, 2000). The challenges of providing this orientation increase in distance study and are particularly acute for students whose earlier experiences of study are pre-web.

The online orientation tutorial for postgraduate students in Veterinary Science aims to:

- Enable students to develop technological and information skills
- Provide clarity in the processes required for completing formal study by distance
- Equip students with core study and time management skills
- Encourage early adoption of reflective practice
- Prepare students for the challenges of online group work
- Provide opportunities for social and professional interaction online
- Reduce the stress of impending study

As well as these orientation-focused goals, online orientation has been designed to encourage students to adopt their *actions* in the online classroom to be the goal of their learning behaviour (cf Young, 2004), rather than considering the online classroom to be a web-based *information resource*, as previous experience with the web might imply. This prepares students to take an active and collaborative approach to learning.

Keywords: orientation to online learning, student orientation, preparation for collaborative online study, postgraduate coursework, orientation to distance education

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