



# Web-based faculty development: e-learning for clinical teachers in the London Deanery

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This [web-based resource] forms part of a range of resources supporting the professional development of clinical teachers

## SUMMARY

**Background:** The London Deanery has provided a web-based resource for supporting the educational development needs of clinical teachers since 2002. This forms part of a range of resources supporting the professional development of clinical teachers and postgraduate supervisors. Following a review in 2007, the deanery commissioned a series of new e-learning modules designed as an introduction to clinical teaching.

**Context:** The deanery's faculty development initiatives are one response to requirements of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB), other policy drivers, workforce

demands and service changes. Increasingly, doctors are required to provide an educational portfolio of evidence, and satisfy the teaching and training component of Good Medical Practice in revalidation or recertification.

**Innovation:** 'e-learning for clinical teachers' comprises 16 short, open-access, free-standing modules. The modules are built around a unifying structure, and cover core topics in clinical teaching: feedback; supervision; workplace-based learning; assessment; diversity and equal opportunities; career development; appraisal; lecturing; small group teaching; interprofessional education; and setting learning objectives. The modules can be used as a com-

plementary resource to award-bearing programmes. On completion of a module, a certificate can be printed out for the teacher's portfolio.

**Implications:** Reflective practice and engagement with an individual's teaching practice is encouraged through self-assessment and a reflective log. The open-access, web-based format enables engagement with the material to suit a doctor's working and learning patterns, and is a valuable adjunct to other forms of learning. The site has been accessed by over 64 000 health professionals (including students, trainees, qualified professionals, supervisors and staff developers) from 155 countries.

The London Deanery has provided a web-based resource for supporting the educational development needs of clinical teachers since 2002. Following a detailed review in 2007, the deanery used some of the original material, and commissioned a series of new modules. 'e-learning for clinical teachers' comprises 16 short, open-access, free-standing modules (Figure 1) that sit alongside the deanery's range of resources, supporting the professional development of clinical teachers and postgraduate supervisors.

The modules cover core topics in clinical teaching; feedback; supervision; workplace-based learning; assessment; diversity and equal opportunities; career development; appraisal; lecturing; small group teaching; interprofessional education; and setting learning objectives (Box 1).

## BACKGROUND

In 2002, the London Deanery initiated a project to develop a web-based open-access resource for clinical teachers written by a group of medical educators. The package had mixed success. For

many it remained invisible; indeed, even within the deanery, educators remain unaware of its existence. However, for those that used it, some found it extremely useful, for example it is a core resource for some staff development programmes, whereas others commented that it was predominantly an on-line textbook, and learning about this complex area of social relations (education) might be best achieved in other formats. It was felt that the web-based concept was helpful to provide support for clinical teachers, but that with the passage of time, and the increasing sophistication of e-learning, the package needed to be overhauled and renewed.

Five years later, in response to the requirements of the Postgraduate Medical Education and Training Board (PMETB),<sup>1</sup> other policy drivers, workforce demands and service changes,<sup>2,3</sup> a new faculty development initiative was launched with the aim of improving teaching and training across London.<sup>4</sup> The strategy aimed to provide a portfolio of resources for the deanery's virtual faculty of clinical educators, delivered in a multitude of varied

formats. A revised web-based platform for novice educators formed a significant element of that strategy.

### E-learning for clinical teachers

The new e-learning concept aimed to address some of the deficits of the earlier resource, whilst retaining some of the key features and content. The main aims of the new approach were:

- To redevelop the web-based 'Teaching the Teachers' package to provide a contemporary series of 'just-in-time' modules.
- To develop modules suitable for doctors in training wanting to develop their teaching skills, busy clinical teachers from all health professions and for anyone wanting to 'dip a toe in the water' of medical education.
- To provide bite-size chunks of practically orientated material, with the opportunity of exploring in more depth via the website (utilising the revised resources), and through hyperlinks to other materials and programmes. It was not to be an on-line 'textbook' of medical education.
- On completion of a module, a certificate was to be generated that clinical teachers may include in an educational portfolio of evidence, or use to satisfy the teaching and training component of Good Medical Practice in revalidation or recertification.
- Guidance and a framework for constructing a portfolio of modules was to be provided, and the package was designed in such a way that the accumulation of modules could also lead to professional accreditation through the Academy of Medical Educators.
- The package was to form part of a raft of educator development materials (up to and

The strategy aimed to provide a portfolio of resources for the deanery's virtual faculty of clinical educators

### Box 1. Key features of the e-learning series

- The series is designed as an introduction for clinical teachers
- It can also be used as a complementary resource to award-bearing programmes
- Each module is built around a unifying structure, and includes:
  - a definition of the topic and learning theory
  - suggested workplace-based activities
  - the completion of a reflective log
- Further reading, additional resources and a glossary of terms are also provided
- Reflective practice and engagement with an individual's teaching practice is encouraged through self-assessment and a reflective log in each module
- On completion of a module, a certificate can be printed out for the teacher's portfolio
- The e-learning modules can be found at <http://www.faculty.londondeanery.ac.uk/e-learning>

Each module includes three suggested workplace-based activities... designed to encourage the application of knowledge in the clinical context

## Box 2. Module design

Preparation ⇨ Instruction ⇨ Work-based activities ⇨ Reflection ⇨ Certification

including Master's programmes) allowing clinicians to step on and off the educational skills escalator.

- The package was to be open access. As a public relations exercise, this was viewed as important to promote a positive image of the London Deanery, not only within the capital but worldwide, as a centre of postgraduate training excellence.
- The package was to be controlled and delivered through the London Deanery website, and the modules were designed to be updated and upgraded 'in house'.

## MODULE DESIGN

Each module is designed around a simple structure, shown in Box 2.

Modules are short. The initial preparatory and instructional phases are designed to take approximately 20 minutes to complete. These comprise between eight and 15 web pages with text, figures and tables. Extended theoretical elements, background reading and a glossary of terms is also available, some of which were produced as part of the original web-based 'Teaching the Teachers' resources. These do not all appear at the 'front end' of modules, the majority are accessed through hyperlinks in the manner of, for example, Wikipedia. There is also a 'teacher's toolkit' that provides examples of summary lists (e.g. 'How to give and receive feedback') or templates (e.g. a lesson plan pro forma). The module materials are designed to be printed out in a PDF format.

Because of the large numbers of diverse users, formal summa-

tive assessments or discussion boards are not included, as this would be too resource intensive to manage. Instead, each module includes three suggested workplace-based activities (e.g. skills coaching, a trainee appraisal, a bedside teaching session or a first lecture) designed to encourage the application of knowledge in the clinical context, and to support reflective self-assessment. Following a specified amount of 'practice' doing these activities, learners are invited to write-up a reflective account of their experience in the reflective diary area of the site, which they can save and return to on an ongoing basis. The written account may also be printed out. On completion, a certificate is issued, which can also be printed as evidence for appraisal, revalidation or promotion purposes.

## THE MODULES

The choice of modules was influenced by a number of interlinked factors: the requirements of PMETB, the London Deanery faculty development core curriculum, the requirements of the Academy of Medical Educators and the recommendations of the Academy of Royal Medical Colleges, in relation to the educational competencies of specialist registrars. There are currently 16 modules in the series (for example see Figure 2).

- Assessing educational needs
- Setting learning objectives
- How to give feedback
- Supervision
- Careers support
- Workplace-based assessment
- Small group teaching
- Facilitating learning in the workplace
- Diversity, equal opportunities and human rights



Figure 1. 'e-learning for clinical teachers' on the London Deanery website.

Use and engagement of the modules is subject to ongoing monitoring

### Box 3. Usage and enrolment statistics (to July 2009)

Module	Go live date	Number enrolled	Number of completions	Percentage completed	Feedback Score (out of five)
Assessing educational needs	Oct 2007	763	545	71	3.7
Setting learning objectives	Oct 2007	340	284	84	4
How to give feedback	Oct 2007	478	377	79	3.8
Supervision	Jan 2008	351	277	79	3.8
Careers support	Feb 2008	166	137	82	4.2
Workplace-based assessment	Mar 2008	334	258	72	4.1
Small group teaching	Apr 2008	353	254	72	4.1
Facilitating learning in the workplace	Apr 2008	195	142	74	3.8
Diversity, equal opportunities., etc.	Mar 2008	627	527	84	3.8
Introduction to educational research	Apr 2008	108	74	68	3.7
Improve your lecturing	May 2008	235	162	69	4.1
Appraisal	June 2008	238	174	56	3.8
Teaching clinical skills	Aug 2008	274	186	68	4.1
Interprofessional education	Oct 2008	85	59	69	3.7
Involving patients in clinical teaching	Feb 2009	86	55	64	3.8

- Introduction to educational research
- Improve your lecturing
- Appraisal
- Teaching clinical skills
- Interprofessional education
- Involving patients in clinical teaching
- Managing poor performance

world (a break down of countries accessing the site is available online Box S1).

In response to user feedback, new literature, and policy and workforce changes, the modules are under regular review and renewal. This is essential to keep the resource relevant and topical. A digest of each module is currently being published as a monthly series in the *British*

*Journal of Hospital Medicine*, and the resource and suite of modules has been peer-reviewed and accepted for publication by MedEd-Portal (a resource of the Academy of American Medical Colleges).<sup>5</sup> The modules have also been made available to medical educators in a number of African countries on CD-ROM, to use in supporting faculty development and training.

### EVALUATION AND ONGOING DEVELOPMENT

Use and engagement of the modules is subject to ongoing monitoring, with an evaluation and feedback mechanism built into the web design, so that user views can be captured. Box 3 illustrates the typical enrolment and feedback statistics collected (up to July 2009).

The site has been accessed by a wide range of people – students, trainees, qualified professionals, supervisors and staff developers – from various health professions across the



Figure 2. Small group teaching – one of 16 e-learning modules for clinical teachers.

**For busy clinicians at all levels of training or practice, the e-learning modules provide an open access resource**

Although a web-based resource can never completely replace a mixed-methods faculty development programme, the enduring success of the London Deanery's e-learning resources shows that, for many clinical teachers, this is a valuable adjunct to other ways of learning. For busy clinicians at all levels of training or practice, the e-learning modules provide an open-access resource for updating and acquiring new knowledge and skills about clinical teaching.

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found in the online version of this article.

**Box S1.** Top ten visiting countries: 6 months to July 2009.

Please note: Wiley-Blackwell are not responsible for the content or functionality of any supporting materials supplied by the authors. Any queries (other than missing material) should be directed to the corresponding author for the article.

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**Conflict of interest:** Judy McKimm was commissioned by the London Deanery to produce the series of e-learning modules to which this article refers.

**Ethical approval:** This article reports on the development of an e-learning resource. Ethical approval was not required. The e-learning resource, which fully informed individuals elect to undertake themselves, poses no potential harm to participants, and anonymity of participants is guaranteed.