

Case Study

Plymouth University

Faculty of Health and
Human Sciences, UK



About the University



Maria Bennallick, module leader

Having gained university status in 1992, Plymouth University is now the 15th largest in the UK, by student number, with 26,900 students and almost 3,000 staff.

The Faculty of Health and Human Sciences is based at two sites, one in Plymouth and the other in Truro, Cornwall.

The Challenge

Currently all Year 1 Adult and Mental Health Field nursing students must take a biology module at the start of their three-year degree programme. From 2017, when a new curriculum is introduced, all Child Field students will also be on this module. With student numbers generally rising – and also having noted that an understanding of essential biology was limited in many of its first-year students – the Faculty recognised that in order to improve student outcomes it needed a user-friendly, interactive biology resource for learners which could adapt to individual needs.

The Solution

After researching various options, Maria Bennallick, module leader for the Biology for Nursing first year module, together with programme leader for Nursing, Sharon Jones, chose McGraw-Hill Education Connect® –

“We’ve since achieved a 95% pass rate for this module, and near 98% usage throughout the entire module.”

a digital teaching and learning environment that saves students and instructors time while improving performance over a variety of critical outcomes.

An online teaching and learning space full of interactive digital tools for students and lecturers, Connect prepares learners for success by helping them to test understanding as they go, building confidence and knowledge every step of the way. Lecturers can easily assign exercises and assess and report on students’ progress in this integrated online resource. The SmartBook resource the university is using through Connect has adaptive elements which have really impressed the students and helped them to structure their learning.

The Results

“Reactions from staff and students alike have been extremely positive, which is really great,” said Maria Bernallick. “We are now able to provide very focused guided learning, with students working at their own pace and self-assessing as they go.”

“Lecturers involved in subsequent modules have noted an increased understanding of biological concepts when the students undertake their nursing modules. Some students have significantly improved their IT skills having overcome fears whilst using the resource.”

“From my point of view, the resources have facilitated my development of the module. The support that I have had from McGraw-Hill Education has also been a tremendous benefit. This included demonstrating the resource to both staff and students so that everyone felt comfortable using it.”

Each week 380+ students completed the assignments set – despite these being offered as formative assessment with no part of the grade being determined by their

completion. The second semester had 100 registrations, of which over 90% completed all assignments. “Overall our students are more engaged in developing their knowledge and understanding of this crucial topic related to nursing,” continued Maria Bernallick. “I’m sure it helps that they can clearly see what level of knowledge they need to acquire, plus they can work any time anywhere, to suit themselves. It will also be a great revision tool as their studies progress.”

“On top of this there have been several other significant benefits for me and the other lecturers on the team. We have all enjoyed the additional resources within the system, the ease with which it allows us to set work and the ability to follow our students’ progression if necessary. We are also using the e-book resources to help us develop the exams we set.”

Managing increasing student numbers is a real challenge and that’s why a resource like Connect is so useful to us.”



Subject Area	Biology for nursing students
Digital Product in Use	McGraw-Hill Education Connect
Featured Product	Connect & LearnSmart
Course Name	Biology for Nursing Practice
Course Type	12 day module in year one of degree
Credit Hours	20 academic credits at Level 4
Textbook in Use	Hole's Essentials of Anatomy and Physiology 12th edition
Instructor Name	Maria Bennallick and a team of seven
Enrolment	500 students rising to 700 by 2016
Case Study Term	2014/15
Outcomes	95% pass rate, and near 98% usage throughout the entire module. Positive student feedback on benefit to their studies. Positive staff feedback on ease of usage throughout the entire module despite it being optional.