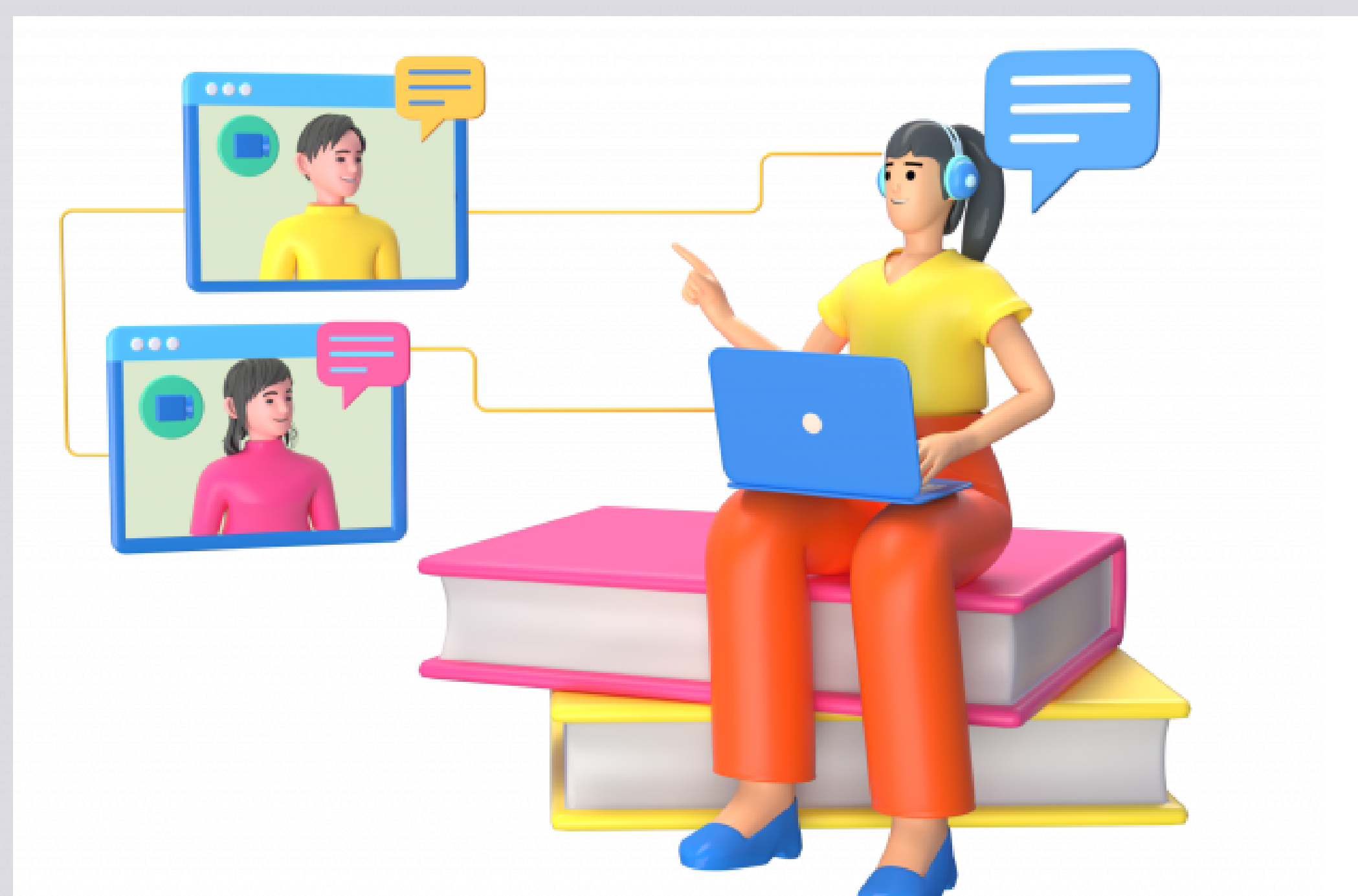


Evaluation of the introduction of a synchronous online induction for postgraduate diploma students

Authors: Rose-Marie O'Byrne, Simon White.

Introduction

A previous qualitative study identified the need for postgraduate clinical diploma distance learning students to have a synchronous induction.(O'Byrne, 2022) A one hour induction session was created to ensure key information regarding study, systems and an opportunity to allow students to get to know each other was covered. This started in January 2022 for each new cohort of students and was delivered in the evening to accommodate working students. It occurred monthly with the exception of August. The aim was to evaluate the content and usefulness of the online induction session.



Methods

No ethical approval was required as this was a service evaluation. An online evaluation form was created using Microsoft Teams® to address the aim of the study. At the end of each session the students were asked to anonymously complete the evaluation form. A link was sent to the students via email and in via the chat function on Microsoft Teams®. Respondents rated the content and usefulness of the session using the rating scale 1 (least useful) - 5 (most useful). Responses were collated in an Excel spreadsheet for descriptive analysis of the quantitative data and thematic grouping of free text responses. (Clarke & Braun, 2017)

Results

130 new students started in the period from January 2022 to December 2022. 88 students (68%) of these attended an induction. Of those who attended an induction 31% completed the evaluation.

Descriptive analysis

Questionnaire rated responses are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Questionnaire responses.

How useful you found:	Mean Score
Welcome activity	4.62
Resources information	4.73
Referencing	4.46
Assessment overview	4.74
Communication and Support	4.82

Qualitative analysis

Three overarching themes emerged from the qualitative data:

- ‘Positive experience’
 - This theme identified that students found the induction a very positive and helpful experience.
 - “Please provide for all. Was very important to me to see humans and not just emails”[P1],
- ‘Problems with advance information and access’
 - This theme identified that students wanted an outline of what topics would be covered within the induction session. Students also wanted the option of multiple sessions to choose from.
 - “An outline of what is to be discussed” “to change timings to alter for everyone’s needs”

Qualitative analysis continued

- ‘Wanting more detail’
 - This theme identified that students wanted greater depth to areas covered within the induction.
 - “Go through examples”

Discussion

Whilst it is acknowledged that the findings are limited to one University and to a small sample size, this evaluation suggested that respondents found the induction useful. This supports the view that postgraduate distance learning students should have a synchronous induction to enable them to see peers and staff.(McPherson et al. 2017) The evaluation also highlights that students want to know about content prior to attendance. Whether or not this would influence attendance is unknown and possibly a future research area. In addition, the results highlight that students want greater detail within the induction. Doing this would extend the time needed to attend which may reduce attendance.

Key implications include:

- Ensuring advance information is clear on session content for students.
- Recognising that distance learning students will likely appreciate having an opportunity for face-to-face interaction with peers and staff.
- Evaluation of duration and advance notice information on attendance.

Conclusion

A synchronous online induction was found useful to students but highlighted areas for improvement. The feasibility of some of these suggestions is an area for future investigations.

References:

- 1 O'Byrne, R.-M. (2022). Exploring the effects of distance-learning on the wellbeing of working pharmacists: A qualitative study. Keele University.
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- 3 McPherson, C., Punch, S., & Graham, E.-A. (2017). Transitions from Undergraduate to Taught Postgraduate Study: Emotion, Integration and Ambiguity. *J Perspect Appl Acad Pract*, 5(2), 42–50.