“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

References


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