



SLC

Specialist Language Courses

CASE STUDY:

ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS IN IRELAND – MEDICAL UNIVERSITY OF BAHRAIN

The Language and Culture Unit at RCSI Bahrain use SLC's online medical English courses in Years 1 and 2 of their BSc (Hons) Nursing programme. Read about how they were chosen, how they were customised to match the university curriculum, and what the teachers and students thought of them.

RCSI Bahrain, is a constituent university of RCSI, established in Dublin, Ireland in 1784. It is an independent private university with over 1,300 students across Schools of Medicine; Nursing and Midwifery and Postgraduate Studies and Research. RCSI Bahrain is a not-for-profit health sciences institution with a mission to *'inspire, educate and train competent and caring graduates, to international standards, who are prepared for life-long learning and to become future healthcare leaders.'*

RCSI Bahrain have been using SLC's online courses to support the English language skills of nursing students at the university for the last two academic years.

Background: selecting the courses

RCSI Bahrain's Language and Culture Unit (LCU) chose to use two of SLC's online English courses to support their nursing undergraduates. First year students take English for Care, a 60-hour A2-B1 level course, while second year students take English for Nurses, a 100-hour B1-B2 level course.

The courses were chosen for two reasons. Firstly, they offered students continued exposure to English outside class time. This was particularly the case for Year 2 students who currently do not have an English module formally integrated into their curriculum.

Secondly, Teaching and Learning is a key component of RCSI's 2018-22 strategic plan. As part of this, RCSI is increasing the number of TEL (technology enhanced learning) initiatives and resources available to students. For the last two academic years, the online English courses are some of many used to strengthen RCSI's commitment to this pillar.

"Through the use of the online course, the LCU team has been able to provide extra English support for nursing students, of all levels, which in turn helps to enhance their learning experience."

Integrating the courses into the RCSI curriculum

To this date, the resources used to teach English at RCSI Bahrain have primarily consisted of an English for Specific Purposes course book, along with supplementary material provided by course instructors.

The online courses were used as supplementary materials in the 2017/18 academic year. Then, for the 2018/19 academic year, the LCU in cooperation with the School of Nursing and Midwifery requested SLC to reorganise the content of both the English for Care and Nursing courses to better match their curricula.

SLC customised the courses accordingly, rearranging and retitling the content of each course to align more closely with the RCSI core module offered in Year 1, 'Human Growth and Development' and that offered in Year 2, 'Fundamentals of Nursing'.

In Year 1, the online course is provided as additional support to core modules, in combination with classroom input and practice. Currently students in Year 2 take the course as a stand-alone support to the practical placements they undertake.

Why use online materials?

The LCU believes that as this is an era where technology and online learning are becoming both more prevalent and convenient, it is important to further integrate the use of online materials into learning and teaching processes.

"Having an online platform such as this gave our students extra support as well as the freedom and flexibility to choose when and where they studied. Not only did it allow them to balance their personal commitments with their education, it also let them take responsibility for their own learning, development and time management – vital skills that will be assets to their personal and professional development."

What did the teachers think of the courses?

The feedback from teachers at RCSI Bahrain has been very positive. They felt that the courses provided students with a good opportunity to take ownership of their learning by independently working on the online content.

They thought the content of the courses aligned well with students' needs and was met with a good level of engagement, which was then reflected in students' acquisition and use of relevant vocabulary.

The online platform SLC uses for the courses was updated in 2018 and the teachers found the new platform to be more aesthetically pleasing which also helped make the course more appealing to students.

The teachers have also made some suggestions on how to improve the courses. These include introducing a system to ensure students follow the courses sequentially, customising the content further, and reducing the amount of language recycling in order to shorten the course duration for Year 2. SLC is looking at implementing these changes before the 2019/20 academic year.

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"I learned new vocabulary (English and medical wise), conditions, treatments and so much more which will definitely help me in my studies and work."

Abeer, Year 1 student

"This course was very useful and related to my study."

Awni, Year 2 student

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And the students?

The LCU reported that their students found the course interesting, useful and relevant to what they were studying in their nursing modules. It also allowed them to gain new knowledge and to practice what they already know.

Some students found the commitment required to complete the courses a challenge, especially Year 2 students on clinical placements. Students' engagement varied at times, which called for close monitoring and follow up from the LCU online course coordinator.

In the end-of-course feedback forms students submitted, 90% of students said they would recommend the course to others.

Next steps

Further customisation

The LCU would like to divide each course into two separate parts in order to support their coordination at the university. As the content is digital, this is a relatively straightforward process and SLC will do this in time for the next semester. These courses will be exclusive to RCSI Bahrain learners.

Platform improvements

The LCU has requested students be given sequential access to units/components, completing each module before moving onto the next. Currently the course is modular, allowing students to pick and choose which units they want to prioritise. SLC is investigating the LCU's request in order to apply it to their specific area within the SLC Campus platform.

SLC is also introducing a reporting change, allowing the LCU to pull dynamic reports tracking students' progress in real time.

Course editing

The key language in each course is recycled throughout the units, ensuring students learn it thoroughly. However, further to the feedback from Year 2 students who are under considerable time pressure, SLC is exploring reducing the amount of recycling in order to shorten course durations. SLC will do this in conjunction with the LCU online course coordinator.



In conclusion

With the partnership between SLC and RCSI Bahrain now entering its third year, the courses have developed over time and will continue to do so to meet the needs of the university and their students. The ongoing dialogue between the two organisations ensures that these needs are understood in greater detail and the digital content allows for the learning to be quickly applied.

SLC is looking forward to working in close partnership with RCSI Bahrain and other like-minded colleges and universities over the coming years.



“In an era where technology and online learning are becoming more prevalent and convenient, it is important to further integrate the use of online materials into the learning and teaching process. Having an online platform, provided by SLC, has helped RCSI Bahrain to do so.”

Christina Strachan, Online Course Coordinator,
RCSI Bahrain



“Working with a partner institution is an evolutionary process. As courses are used and feedback is taken from students and teachers, we develop the content to meet specific and changing requirements. In this case, the courses the RCSI Bahrain students will take in the third academic year of our partnership are quite different to those taken in the first.”

Chris Moore, Managing Director, SLC



About SLC

SLC publishes online Medical English, IELTS and OET test preparation courses, and is the UK's leading provider of online English language courses to the global healthcare sector.

SLC's courses enable thousands of medical students around the world to study, research, develop themselves, and network internationally in English, the lingua franca of medicine.



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