

Establishment of an Education System for Working Graduate School Students Using a Distance Education System

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Abstract and Objective

In Japan, the demand for practical educational programs for healthcare professionals with full-time jobs is now increasing. However, students face a variety of difficulties in continuing their jobs at hospitals in order to attend graduate school, and hospitals may lose valuable staff members who choose to study rather than work. Therefore, it is important to prepare a graduate school environment that is compatible with the lives of working people. In April 2008, a Clinical Information Analyst Course for working Health Information Managers (HIMs) was established as a 2-year master's degree program at the International University of Health and Welfare Graduate School. In this course, we train HIMs to become clinical information analysts capable of analyzing clinical data using knowledge from a wide range of topics, including information technology, medical business and cancer registration. The objectives of the present study are to explain the approach of this course and to obtain knowledge about the establishment of an education system for working graduate school students. This course is a part of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) project "Training Plan of Cancer Professionals".

Keywords:

Distance education, Graduate education, Medical record administrator.

Methods

In this course, a distance education system is used to educate working students. Our distance education system consists of the following two subsystems. (1) Remote Lecture System: Our graduate school has eight campuses connected by a video conference system. As students can attend classes by video conference in a classroom near their home or office, they can take classes at a number of campuses without having to long travel or change their address. (2) Web-based Training (WBT) System: Using this system, students can view lecture videos on the internet anytime and anywhere. After viewing a video, students must answer questions about the system. We use two types of lecture videos. (a) Classroom lecture videos are recorded live during lectures in classrooms. In principle, students should attend these lectures in person, but students who are unable to attend may view a classroom lecture video. To

identify trends in learning among students, we compared the number of students who attended lectures in person with the number of those who viewed the classroom lecture videos instead. (b) Studio lecture videos are made in a recording studio for the sole purpose of providing online learning material. Basic topics that are not covered in live classroom lectures are provided in studio lectures on the WBT system. Students must view studio lecture videos on the WBT system in order to obtain the information covered in these lectures.

Results

Seven students entered the course in April 2008. All but one student were working in a hospital at the time of enrollment. We checked the attendance records of the 7 students for 23 lectures between the beginning of April and the end of July 2008. They attended the classroom lectures 104 (64.6%) times, learned the classroom lectures by the lecture videos 42 (26.1%) times, and were absent from the classroom lectures and did not view any lecture videos on the WBT system 15 (9.3%) times.

Conclusion

By using a distance education system, students are able to continue working while taking a graduate school course. The students followed in the present study have achieved positive results, and they are expected to complete the course in March 2010. Nevertheless, students are not attending the lecture about 10% times. We aim to reduce this rate in the future by enhancing the usability of the WBT system and improving the interaction between students and staff members. The project is continuing and 11 new students entered in 2009.

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