University of Exeter
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MSc Leading Clinical Research Delivery

Embedding Inclusive Learning Design in a Fully Online Postgraduate Health Related Course.

Background

The MSc in Leading Clinical Research Delivery (LCRD) is a fully online course featuring both synchronous and asynchronous learning. Aimed at developing research delivery staff, particularly targeting the workforce of underserved areas and populations, the course attracts a broad range of clinical researchers from all areas of healthcare across the country. It includes a huge diversity of learners from those with no previous HE qualification to the highly academic, from UK and non-UK education systems, all aspects of neurodiversity, diverse ethnic groups and those for whom English is not their first language.
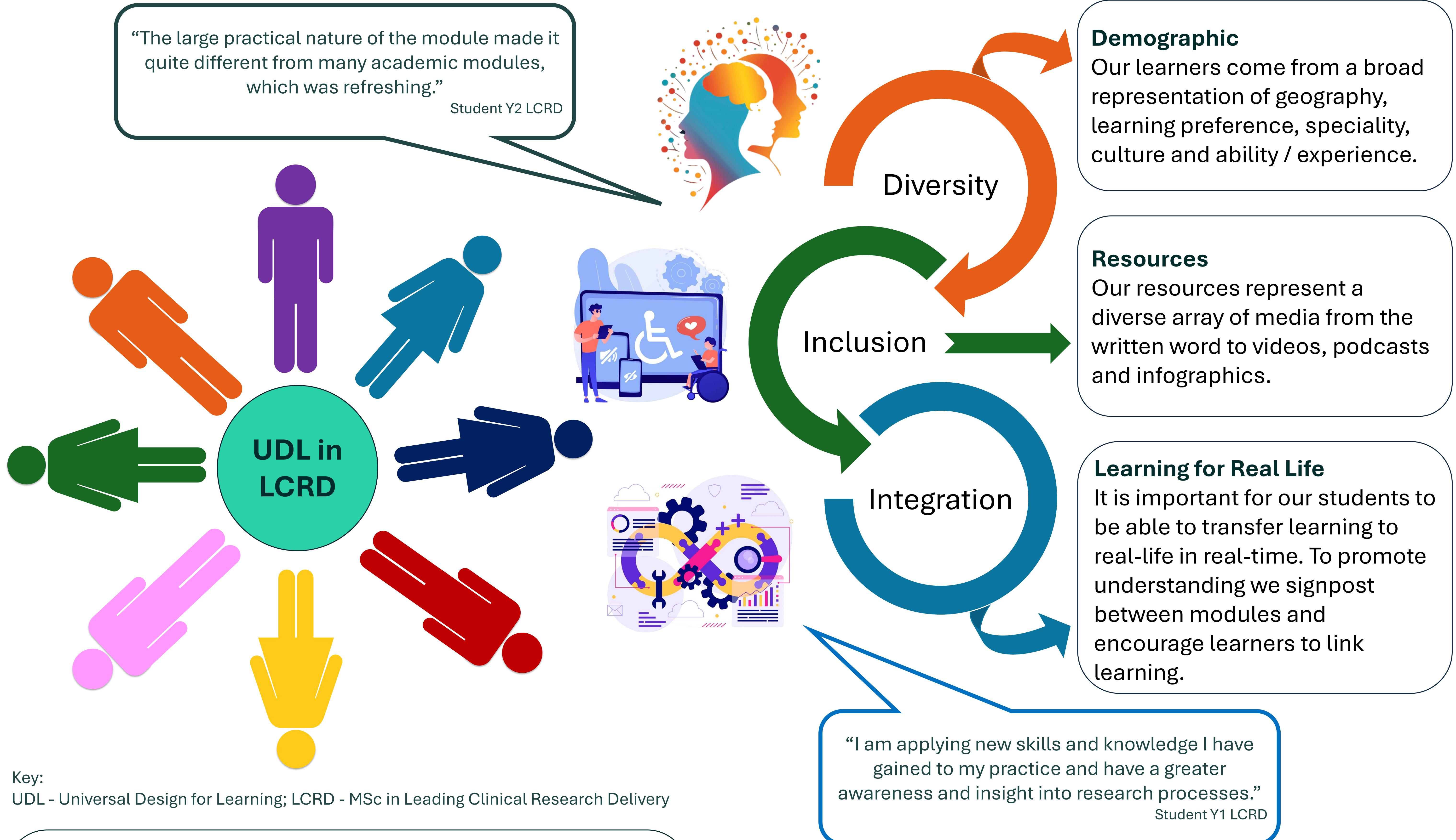
Methods

To maximise relationship development, our synchronous online learning days incorporate interactive sessions with facilitated and unfacilitated small-group breakouts to connect geographically and speciality diverse networks, as well as more closely related learners. We encourage our learners to 'meet electronically' apart from the scheduled sessions to discuss and share their experiences and progress. Asynchronous learning materials are designed to allow students to access learning according to their learning-stage and their preferred medium (video, audio, written, etc.) Materials are aimed to accommodate different learning preferences and priorities at different times to promote inclusivity and engagement.

Learning ethos

Our core learning in practice modules is designed to be fully inclusive and allow leaners to explore their own areas of focus for learning. Leaners develop an individualised learning plan with guidance of an experienced workplace supervisor and an academic tutor. Critical reflection skills are taught and implemented in practice throughout the MSc with the aim of encouraging lifelong learning and developing skills for reflective practice and leadership.

"The large practical nature of the module made it quite different from many academic modules, which was refreshing."
Student Y2 LCRD

UDL in LCRD

Diversity

Inclusion

Integration

Demographic
Our learners come from a broad representation of geography, learning preference, speciality, culture and ability / experience.

Resources
Our resources represent a diverse array of media from the written word to videos, podcasts and infographics.

Learning for Real Life
It is important for our students to be able to transfer learning to real-life in real-time. To promote understanding we signpost between modules and encourage learners to link learning.

"I am applying new skills and knowledge I have gained to my practice and have a greater awareness and insight into research processes."
Student Y1 LCRD

Key:
UDL - Universal Design for Learning; LCRD - MSc in Leading Clinical Research Delivery

Digital Learning Environment

We are trying to use consistent designs and messaging across our digital learning spaces. Where we can we signpost and link learning across modules and provide opportunities to deepen and develop learning across areas of interest. We incorporate a variety of options for students to engage with each other and course staff, using interactive discussion forums, such as Padlet™ and Mural™ visual workspaces.

Key Findings

Communication is key to ensuring good engagement, encouraging cohorts to give immediate and longer-term feedback inviting new ideas and thinking to course design. The diversity of learners on our program has provided a unique opportunity to champion inclusive design through ongoing development with students working in synergy with educationalist voices to maximise learning opportunities.

Conclusions

We are just about to embark on our first Master's year. Feedback we have received so far from our learners and their employers suggests that there is a definite trend towards transfer of learning into the workplace. We recognise that there are still improvements to be made. We intend to continue to develop our assessment methods and resources and how they are presented, taking notice of what is available in the digital world and incorporating innovation as we go, to ensure we stay up to date and fit for purpose as a 21st century inclusive postgraduate programme.