UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

CASE STUDY
University of London

Since 2002, ICLS has been teaching LL.B. students to successfully pass their University of London law exams

BACKGROUND

The University of London has a long history of educational innovation. Founded in 1826, it was the first secular university in the UK and the first to grant degrees to women. In 1858, the university founded its International Programs department, making it the oldest distance learning institution in the world. Today, more than 50,000 students in 180 countries are enrolled in the International Programs. In addition, a number of private institutions around the world are recognized by the university as offering preparation for the University of London exams.

One such institution is the International Center for Legal Studies (ICLS) in Asheville, North Carolina. Founded in 2002 by attorneys, Dr. George Pappas and Ellen P. Pappas, ICLS provides international students with instruction preparing them to pass the University of London's law degree examinations. ICLS is also an approved Registered Teaching Centre certified by the University of London Worldwide. Dr. Pappas himself holds four degrees, including two law degrees (LL.B. and Ph.D) from the University of London. He was also the North American advisor for the University of London International Programs between 2004 through 2017. He runs the online school with his wife Ellen Pappas, Director of Admissions and Marketing. Being online offered another advantage over traditional teaching institutions – access to international teachers experienced with the University of London's examinations. ICLS selected Remote Learner (now a Learning Pool company) as their solution provider in 2006, to support them in the provision of a high-quality Digital Learning Environment (DLE).

Dr. Pappas launched ICLS as an online school with the dream of providing access to legal education to anyone in the world. Being online offered another advantage over a traditional school – access to international teachers experienced with the University of London's law degree program. For the first few years of its existence, the ICLS website's design and content were managed by Dr. Pappas himself.

THE CHALLENGE

Dr. Pappas soon realized self-hosting and administration of his site was not an ideal situation, as web technology and learner needs changed faster than he could keep up. "The technology was becoming more cumbersome to use. It became very difficult trying to upload lectures and put together forum rooms. There was no real integration," he said. After encountering Learning Pool at a University of London event, he approached the company looking for a solution. Learning Pool's first challenge was to bring ICLS content and programs onto a modern platform. Dr. Pappas said the difference between self-hosting and Learning Pool was like night and day. "Immediately, my headaches went away. From the very beginning the site has been robust. I've had no breakdowns. I know we would not have progressed the way we have without Learning Pool," Pappas explained. Pleased with this outcome, Dr. Pappas came to Learning Pool in 2018 with a new challenge. He wanted to significantly upgrade the functionality and navigation of his Learning Management System (LMS) and prepare it for potential increase in new students and teachers. He also wanted to include functions such as automatic certifications, embedded video, and web conference solutions.

THE SOLUTION

Learning Pool's team went to work with Dr. Pappas, determining how best to achieve his vision. First, the LMS was upgraded with Learning Pool's own Altitude theme. Altitude significantly improved the look and navigation of the site, making it more intuitive and reducing the user's cognitive load with a more efficient presentation of course information.

Learning Pool's exclusive Personalization Filter was added, further enhancing the student experience. This filter lets instructors create templates with personalization fields, so students receive targeted personal communications on course content.

Popular video conferencing tool Zoom has also been integrated into the ICLS learning environment. ICLS has annual face-to-face events in Toronto and New York, and this addition will make it much easier for international students to connect, as well as offer a new way for students to connect with tutors during their studies. Students can also access a new integrated media player that allows them to play and hear audio within course assignments.

THE RESPONSE

"The site looks great! (This) will enable us to use a lot more video conferencing then in the past. It's going to take ICLS to a different level. Having a platform that allows students to connect in a user friendly environment makes the experience smoother.
The smoother their experience, the more encouraged they are to use the platform,"

Dr Pappas

THE RESULTS

Dr. Pappas and the ICLS staff and teachers are impressed with what Learning Pool has done to update their LMS and the user experience. Dr. Pappas believes the improvements take the school to a new level and prepare it for future growth.

LOOKING AHEAD

In coming months, ICLS intends to expand student capacity and offer their own certification in law. Learning Pool's recent improvements make both of these goals possible.

"We have some face-to-face teaching in Toronto and New York City and now with Zoom we may be able to include students who cannot attend in person. The site is going to incorporate certification for a brand new program we are launching this year called the Certificate of Legal Studies," explained Dr. Pappas. "With Learning Pool, we've now developed a prototype for that. Having that certificate feature is going to make life a lot easier."

"Just keep doing what you're (Learning Pool) doing. It gets better and better every year," he said.

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