



Questionmark Case Study

Nursing Program Relies Upon Questionmark Perception for High Stakes Exams

Scenario

Onondaga Community College Department of Nursing, a two-year program located southwest of Syracuse, New York, realized as early as 1996 that it had to shift how it was testing its students. While the department had been giving exams in the conventional paper and pencil way, the National Board of Nursing began delivering the National Licensing Examination for Registered Professional Nursing (NCLEX) via computer. Since part of Onondaga's mission is to prepare its graduates to take that exam so they can be licensed as registered nurses, faculty in the program realized it must begin using computerized testing also. Onondaga began several years ago with Questionmark for Windows, which enabled the department to not only move students to computerized testing but also provided immediate results with accompanying feedback and remediation.

Secure Browser

As part of a complete computer and software upgrade to Windows XP, the nursing program subsequently switched to the Questionmark™ Perception™ and Perception Secure Browser. Though students take the exams in a non-proctored computer lab with video camera surveillance, test security remains a major concern. Perception and Secure Browser enable the department to "lock-out" the computers, denying students the ability to access either the Internet or word processing programs that might provide an unfair advantage.

Remote Testing

Pamela Ryan, chairperson and professor in the Department of Nursing, likes the feature that enables students to log onto an Internet URL where the test resides, while maintaining security.

"Students who work in a local hospital are allowed to take the exams in a secure setting," she said. "They might not be able to come to campus when the lab is available. By using Perception and Secure Browser we could deliver the tests securely remotely."

Randomized Questions

If nursing students fail their first attempt at the exam, they must take it again. Onondaga doesn't want to deliver the same test so Ryan appreciates the feature in Perception that enables random selection from a block of questions. This feature guarantees test integrity because students can't share questions with their peers. Students can take the tests a total of four times. The second failure requires a meeting with the lead teacher and subsequent remediation.

Cost Savings

The department uses over 100 exams on Questionmark Perception, testing on all the nursing courses it offers. The program enables the faculty to create their own questions and makes it easy for the department office administrator to input them – all online. In addition, the program runs on the school's server and is maintained by the in-house IT department – a real cost saver. Now the department will move to Questionmark Secure this summer to gain further security by disabling the capabilities to start new applications as well as task switching.

More information

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