

Plain Language Statement

Understanding Medical Students' Learning Behaviour Through Analytics

The purpose of this document is to describe how automatically generated data relating to the normal operation and use of the MD Connect student learning and administration platform will be used to support research into medical students' learning behaviour. Detailed usage data are routinely and incidentally captured (in the form of server logs) by virtually all online systems. These data contain information about which services within the system are being accessed, which user is requesting the access, and how the service is being utilised. The term analytics typically refers to the processing and analysis of these data to provide information on how the system and its services are being used in a readily interpretable form. Learning analytics refers to the application of analytics data to interpret, assess and support learning activities and processes.

As a user of the MD Connect platform, analytics relating your use of the platform and its services are generated each time you interact with the system. These data, which are anonymised and are stored on a secure server, are primarily intended to support the normal operation of the MD Connect platform. However, selected elements of these data may also be used to support evaluation and research related to students' use of MD Connect and the delivery of learning and teaching programs and activities within the medical curriculum. The core aims of this program are to provide improvements to MD Connect users in terms of usability and utility of the platform and in the delivery and support of key learning activities. We anticipate that measurable improvements in these areas will ultimately be reflected in enhanced learning outcomes for all medical students.

Key Research themes

Analytics data generated by the MD Connect platform will be used to support a range of research themes and projects. These are described more fully on the MD Connect website (<https://mdconnect.medicine.unimelb.edu.au/html/research.html>) but key themes include:

1. Understanding students' selection and use of digital resources.
2. Understanding variations in students' study patterns.
3. Understanding variations in students' learning paths.
4. Enhancing the development and use of clinical portfolios*.
5. Providing personalised feedback on progress*.

*Themes that could involve the use of user contributed data (e.g. clinical portfolios) or assessment data that could be potentially identifiable will be subject to supplementary ethics approval and this will be made explicit at any time this occurs.

Participation

All MD Connect users are potential participants in this research. Anonymised analytics data is routinely captured by the MD Connect platform and selected elements of these data may be used for evaluation and research purposes.

Confidentiality

All analytics data related to this program of research is anonymised and is stored in a secure database. Research related access to these data is restricted to named researchers and because of its anonymised nature, published or communicated reports based on these data will never include personal or identifying

information. It is important that you recognise that this data will not (and cannot - due to its anonymised nature) have any influence on your marks, assessment, or any other component of your MD program in any way. There is absolutely no relationship between your use of MC Connect, the analytics data generated by you and any progress decisions in the MD program.

Findings

The findings from this program of research will be disseminated through various presentations and publications, details of which will be freely available through the MD Connect website (<https://mdconnect.medicine.unimelb.edu.au/html/research.html>).

Further information

Should you require any further information about this program of research, or have any concerns about the capture, storage or application of analytics data related to your use of the MD Connect platform, please contact the research team at mdc-research@unimelb.edu.au.

Should you have any further concerns about the conduct of this project, you are welcome to contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, on phone: 8344 2073 or fax: 9347 6739.