

Dct students continue to prepare for success in the industry with online learning

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Initiative by Dubai College of Tourism provides e-learning opportunities and virtual wellness support to students

Dubai College of Tourism (DCT), an institution established by Dubai's Department of Tourism and Commerce Marketing (Dubai Tourism), is helping students to stay focused and engaged during the current period of self-isolation and social distancing through its interactive online learning programme. Ensuring there are no gaps in their learning, the motivational programme enables students to continue building key industry skills and knowledge whilst studying towards their chosen course and preparing for remote internships upon the completion of the semester.

By introducing virtual learning techniques, the College's inspirational instructors have been able to minimise disruption to student development by following the same schedule as if they were in the classroom, with virtual interactive sessions that include a mix of practical demonstrations, live guest speakers, Q &As, group presentations, role-plays and assessments, which are then presented online.

Commenting on the programme, **Essa Bin Hadher, General Manager of DCT**, said: "The situation we are facing today is unprecedented, but we have endeavoured to adapt to the new reality with our distance learning initiative. By developing a comprehensive and integrated electronic learning and training environment, we are able to empower our students to continue their education with as little disruption as possible, and remain resourceful and fully engaged at this time. The initial response from our students has been very positive and we commend both them and our highly professional instructors for embracing this new system so seamlessly."

Creative Culinary Sessions

As one of the only institutes still delivering practical training sessions online to Culinary Arts students, DCT's chef instructors are streaming a variety of cooking demonstrations straight from their home kitchens while recording themselves each step of the way. The programme's lead instructor for Culinary Arts, Chef Christian Biesbrouck, led a recent session whereby he challenged his students to make a Japanese cheesecake at their homes and then showed them the proper technique by recording his own efforts for them to watch virtually.

Tourism and Retail Assignments

The students across the Tourism and Retail courses have been honing their marketing skills as they work towards developing new product and service innovations under the close guidance of their tutors. As part of DCT's Tour Guiding course unit, students will use technology and the Dubai 360 tool to create their own bespoke audio guide of the city with distance learning platforms enabling them to pitch their ideas to their tutors, really bringing their learnings to life. In addition, the retail students have been tasked with setting up an online merchandise store for DCT.

Health and Wellbeing

DCT's distance learning programme also goes beyond practical and theoretical learning to provide mental health support including yoga, nutrition, and tips for remaining motivated. The 'Wellbeing Challenge' was introduced to provide students with a holistic package over the Spring break to help combat the disruption to their daily lives. With normal routines interrupted and students unable to take part in many of their hobbies, the Wellbeing Challenge compiled helpful resources, videos and articles for students to keep up with their goals and remain confident, refreshed, and focused. From fitness and nutrition, to learning new skills, the students were challenged to set goals for themselves over the course of the week to help them maintain a positive mentality without ignoring the challenges they were facing during this difficult period. Community partners, Marcus Smith and Rob Jones of InnerFight created videos especially for the students to learn about energy and nutrition while Liisi Kitsing, a yoga teacher based in Dubai, also created a short video for the students to teach them about meditation and mindfulness.

Engaging Guest Speaker Programme and Virtual Events

DCT is continuing with its unique guest speaker programme, streaming live sessions for students to tune into, providing real life perspectives from the industry. Ria West, a Dubai Make-Up Influencer with over 80,000 Instagram followers gave an insightful session on the 'do's & don'ts' of social media while Dinesh Sandran, Assistant General Manager of Pico, a Brand Activation Agency with 40 offices around the world talked to students about the recent shift in business strategy, with the focus now on creating virtual events for their clients. Professional singer Anna Reay who usually performs at large events and aboard cruise ships spoke to students about having to adapt her skills to sing live on Facebook, with recent performances posted on 'Live Jam' which raises money to support the health care system in the UK.

Arva Ahmed from Frying Pan Adventures is lined up to interact with DCT's Tourism students as part of the Tour Guiding course unit and Gordon Ramsey's Sous Chef at Bread Street Kitchen, Garth De Villiers will be hosting a live cooking competition for students to participate in from their own kitchens.

Mr Bin Hadher concluded, "Socially and emotionally, we are maintaining the strong connection to each other through new forms of communication. Although this is a challenging time for all of us, we stand together to prioritise learning that is highly interactive, rich in content, stimulating in its approach, and hugely rewarding for our students."