



Training the lawyers of tomorrow

CPLED combines online and in-person learning to guide aspiring lawyers through the Practice Readiness Education Program

Understanding Canadian law is only one aspect of becoming an effective lawyer. Legal professionals also need to earn the trust of their clients, colleagues, and the public, while applying to their practice compassion, respect, and a strong grasp of the operational aspects of law firms. To help new lawyers acquire the skills for success, the Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED) developed an online learning program using D2L's Brightspace platform.

At a glance

Client: Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED)

Learners: 1,000

Industry: Legal Education

Website: cpled.ca

Platform/Features:

- Brightspace Core
- Surveys
- Quizzes
- Learning & Creative Services
- Bongo

Interviewees:

- Dr. Kara Mitchelmore, CEO
- Andrea Rodic, Program Manager
- Carly Thompson, Communications Advisor

Highlights:

- Helps learners develop the broad range of skills they will need for a successful legal career
- Empowers students to apply new knowledge through a variety of learning techniques and tools
- Marks a new chapter of continuous innovation and online course development at CPLED

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Andrea Rodic, Program Manager, CPLED

Challenge

Putting law into practice

Legal training at universities has changed very little over the past century. While degrees equip aspiring lawyers with a deep understanding of the intricacies of the law, law school does not always nurture the holistic set of skills that successful legal professionals need to apply in daily practice.

The Canadian Centre for Professional Legal Education (CPLED) is dedicated to helping bright minds in Alberta, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Saskatchewan successfully complete the Bar admission program and become practicing lawyers.

To achieve this mission, CPLED helps recent law graduates develop the practical knowledge, communication skills, and emotional intelligence required to thrive through its accredited Practice Readiness Education Program (PREP).

Andrea Rodic, program manager at CPLED, explains: “Rather than taking an exam, prospective lawyers in the four jurisdictions we represent must complete an articling requirement, which includes working for a firm for up to a year while completing PREP. PREP is designed to help students grow and develop throughout this articling term.”

Before the outbreak of the global coronavirus pandemic, PREP included a mix of online learning, in-person training, and workshops. When the Canadian and Provincial governments put strict measures in place to curb the spread of COVID-19, CPLED decided to deliver all phases of PREP online, which meant it needed to move existing program elements into an online environment as quickly as possible.

Carly Thompson, communications advisor at CPLED, comments: “During the development of PREP, we researched and took the time to invest in technology to be able to deliver phases of the program online. It was time-consuming to explore and invest in the technology, but we believe this investment was worth it as it helped us create an exceptional program and allowed us to shift to a fully online program during COVID. We were able to work on refining the use of technology in PREP to provide students with an engaging and interactive online educational program instead of scrambling to figure out what we were going to do now that social distancing is a way of life.”



Solution

Moving competency-based training online

To help accelerate its move to online learning, CPLED extended its use of D2L's Brightspace platform, which is a central resource for all program content, training, and assessments.

Andrea Rodic comments: "After our initial deployment of the Brightspace platform, once we had explored all the features, it was clear that the platform had the flexibility, reliability, and rich functionality that we were looking for to move our program fully online. In fact, I can't imagine ever decreasing the use of our D2L solution in the years ahead."

In addition to creating a fully online version of PREP, CPLED also used the Brightspace platform to develop a shorter online eight-week Legal Research and Writing (LRW) course, which focuses on the fundamental legal research and writing skills required of practicing lawyers in Canada.

Connecting learning communities

To minimize the risk of pandemic-related disruption delaying new students in their mission to be called to the bar, CPLED worked with D2L's Learning & Creative Services team, which provided learning and creative services to help move PREP online as quickly as possible. As well as redesigning and testing program content for online learning, the organization also planned to onboard over 1,400 users in the Brightspace platform, including 350 external contractors and assessors as well as 950 students.

Carly Thompson reflects: "The Learning & Creative Services team were really supportive. They took the time to understand our unique needs and worked around the clock to help us get PREP online quickly and effectively."

“With support from D2L, we’ve developed innovative ways to help aspiring legal professionals gain the skills, experience, and practice they need to become accredited lawyers in Canada.”

Andrea Rodic, Program Manager, CPLED

Result

Driving continuous innovation

By moving its PREP and LRW courses online with the Brightspace platform, CPLED is much better placed to continuously develop its courses, enhance learning, and help more students develop the skills required to become practicing lawyers.

Dr. Kara Mitchelmore, CEO of CPLED, says: “By moving online, we were able to keep our students learning and studying throughout the COVID-19 pandemic—helping them establish their careers as lawyers and legal professionals without delay. Our partners were pleased too, because our online program meant there was no need to rethink the Bar admission program during the pandemic.”

Andrea Rodic adds: “Embracing online learning has given us more opportunities to evolve program content and delivery. For instance, we’ve combined a wide range of learning formats such as quizzes, video tutorials, and virtual classrooms with more traditional written assessments. Offering a more varied online program structure will also help keep students engaged and cater to a variety of different learning styles.”

CPLED is also using the surveys feature in the Brightspace platform to gain feedback from students, assessors, and external contractors every step of the way.

Carly Thompson explains: “We’re still compiling the data that we have collected from our first intake of PREP students. While it’s too early to draw any strong conclusions, the ability to collect and analyze this data will certainly help drive decision-making when it comes to further improving the program’s provision.”

Dr. Kara Mitchelmore adds: “The feedback we collect from stakeholders is extremely important, as it helps us continue to make improvements to the program. We are committed to ensuring PREP continues to evolve and the survey feedback we collect via the Brightspace platform allows us to hear directly from our students and achieve our goal of a best-in-class Bar admission program.”

Andrea Rodic concludes: “By adopting the Brightspace platform, we’ve been able to explore the full potential of online learning for our students. With support from D2L, we’ve developed innovative ways to help aspiring legal professionals gain the skills, experience, and practice they need to become accredited lawyers in Canada.”