

CASE STUDY

"You create a laboratory where students can practice their skills a lot"

Introduction

In the training programme 'Dealing with extreme emotions', first-year Psychology students at Maastricht University practice basic skills. In role-plays, they get to know Mrs. Hudson, who is about to take a psychological test. If things don't go according to plan, the students have to show that they can handle this. And that is not always easy.



Reinier Kreutzkamp is a teacher in the Clinical Psychological Science section within the Faculty of Psychology and Neuroscience. He trains students mainly in clinical skills. He also develops supporting audiovisual material for various training courses.

Learning objectives

Maastricht University works according to the principles of problem-based learning. In this approach, groups of students work with specific casuistic issues. They determine what they know and don't know about the subject and use this information to set learning goals. Students train intensively in smaller groups of no more than twelve people to achieve these learning goals. "And training involves practice, practice, practice", says Reinier Kreutzkamp, lecturer at the department of Clinical Psychological Science.

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Preparation for the second year

Students are introduced to the programme Dealing with extreme emotions at the end of the first year, in preparation for the second year. In the second year, they work with skills such as psychiatric anamnesis and psychiatric interviewing. For this, they need to have basic skills such as reflecting, giving feedback and structuring a conversation. "Students need to know many things, but also be able to do many things," says Kreutzkamp. "There used to be training for those basic skills, but because there was more and more emphasis on specific skills, such as presenting, those general skills were pushed into the



background. Until we came to the conclusion: soon these students will have to conduct a clinical interview and will lack general interviewing skills. Because there was very little room in the curriculum, we looked for alternatives and ended up with TrainTool.”

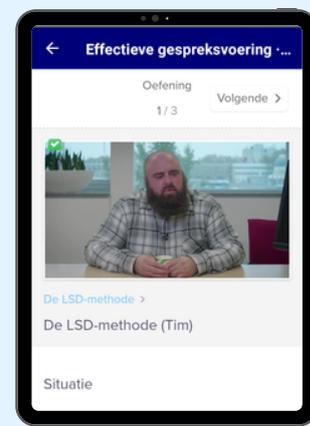
TrainTool

TrainTool is the software of Faculty of Skills. In TrainTool, students practise with video role plays. They watch a video of a conversation situation and then record their own reaction on video. The student can watch the video and repeat the exercise, or ask a fellow student or teacher for feedback. The student can practice as often as necessary. The tool also offers space for extra instruction videos, short tests and tips.

Every year, more than 10,000 students at universities, colleges and vocational schools use the training programmes.

TrainTool is available in both a web browser and an app for smartphone or tablet.

[More about TrainTool in higher education](#)



[See how it works on YouTube](#)

Psychological test

Before students start practising in TrainTool, they follow a lecture of about two hours in which the teacher tells the students more about the desired social skills. They get exercises about skills like paraphrasing and giving emotional reflections. The students also get instructions on how to work in TrainTool. Afterwards, they can start whenever and wherever they want, on their own phone or laptop.

Kreutzkamp explains how the exercises go: "As a student, you are doing a research internship and an elderly lady sits at your table for a psychological test. You have just explained the test and she can start, but she does not start. You notice that she reacts sad and stressed because she can't do it." The

video stops and the student's webcam pops on: it's up to him or her to give an appropriate response. In a subsequent role-play, things go a bit further. "Then the test subject tries to make the test leader feel bad. She lashes out and says: 'I could see you were laughing at me!' The student then has to explain calmly that this was never the intention, and so on. The student has to respond empathically, but also stay in control and guide the conversation in the right direction."

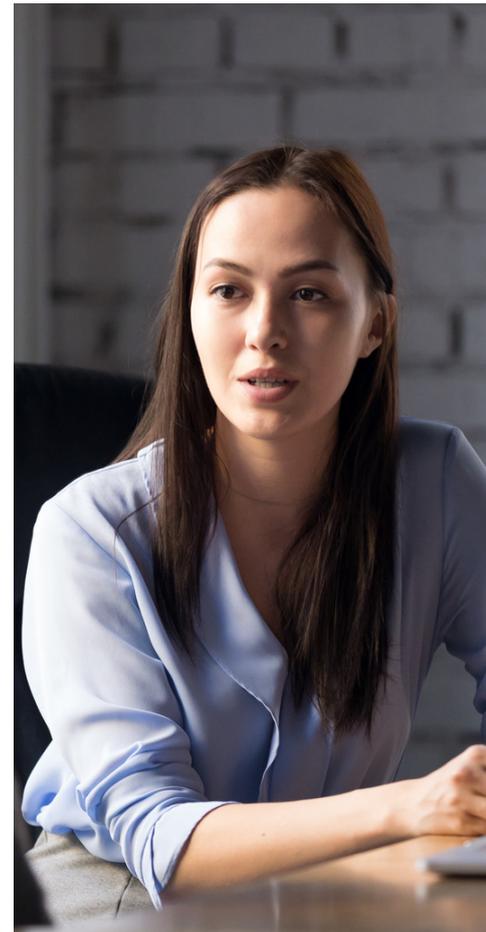
Feedback

The students can watch the videos as many times as they like, practise with different reactions and further refine the best ones. Finally, they hand in the recordings for feedback. "Then you see that most students have mastered the empathic response, they all do. But giving structure to a conversation and maintaining a good lead are more difficult. So they get feedback on that", says Kreutzkamp.

In this programme, the videos are watched and assessed by expert teachers at the university. With more than 400 students participating, it makes sense to share the workload. Nevertheless, Kreutzkamp is not afraid of the amount of work. "I know that I give a lot of feedback and it takes me about 15 minutes per student. So that's not too bad." Students also respond to each other. The idea is that every student invites two others to watch his or her videos and provide peer feedback. "Students say that this really helps them, especially in thinking about how a reaction is created and how it comes across to the other person."

More than a cognitive learning tool

Kreutzkamp is a great advocate of the use of video in education. "With video, you can really show how something should be done, but you can also put the student in the middle of a situation. Then you have a learning tool that is not only cognitive, but in which you have to learn to regulate your own emotions. With TrainTool,



you actually create a kind of laboratory situation in which students can practice skills." However, Kreutzkamp emphasises that a recording can never replace face-to-face contact. "It is truly supplementary. You always see less on video than in real life. When students practise with a simulation patient, they have a lot more cues to pay attention to, such as body language."



"It is extremely important for the success of the project that the support is well organised."



The recordings for this programme were made in-house, by the university's own media team. A great luxury according to Kreutzkamp. "But I must say that the guidance from Faculty of Skills was very helpful. We had made a kind of pilot programme before, but it did not work out very well. The role-plays were too long and included too many subjects. Our contact at Faculty of Skills has rewritten the scenarios into real role plays." Kreutzkamp also wants to praise the support department. "It is very important for the success of such a project that the support is well organised. The helpdesk was always so quick with answers, resolute and focused, both for students and teachers. Really nice."

Tips for teachers who want to start using TrainTool in their teaching



Determine in advance which competences will be trained and tested

"If you decide that students must show empathy, determine in advance exactly what you want to see. What behaviour do you want to see in the student? Make sure you know exactly what the student needs to show to demonstrate the skill."



Support your coaches with an expert

"Make sure the coaches know what is expected of them in the feedback to students. It is wise to involve an expert whom they can consult in case of doubt. Sometimes a student shows an excellent response, which nevertheless does not match the criteria. It is then nice to be able to consult with a back-up."

The programme in numbers

number of registered participants

409

students started

87%

completion rate

83%

Student reviews

"I really like the way the programme is set up. You first learn the 'basics' of conducting a conversation, giving and receiving feedback and through exercises you prepare yourself well for the test. It is also nice that, during the exercises, there is the possibility to get feedback from other students. This already gives an indication of possible areas of improvement."

Score 8

"The TrainTool program was the first time that us students actually were challenged to interact with a patient, which I really liked. Also, the feedback system worked well and I started thinking of possible improvements in my performance."

Cijfer 9

Average rating

6.9



2019 figures

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Faculty of Skills creates training and development programmes for educational institutions, the public sector and businesses. We do this with a sophisticated mix of training in our software, live and online meetings. Personal feedback is always an important starting point.

Curious about our way of working or want to know more about how TrainTool works? Please contact us without any obligations.



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