University Q & A Regarding Service

Q.1 **Does DoctoralNet Ltd need to authenticate or in any way access our institutions Directory Data in order to provide services for our students?**

A.1 No, DoctoralNet subscription services do not require authentication with or through your servers.

To enable maximum engagement by students we suggest you webmaster establish links to our services through locations on your site. At the time your students are onboarded through ours they are assigned a password and encouraged to change it to meet their needs. Their username is created FirstInitial.LastName.Your UniversityInitials such as L.Lindsey.DCU.

Q.2 **Tell us more about the portal through which our students sign in.**

A. 2 As part of your subscription, once the purchase order is executed and your university gives us a copy of your logo, we establish the portal through which your students sign on to the site. This is shown on http://doctoralnet.com/university-portal . Note that there is an area for your university guidelines, links to key pages you want your students to access, etc which will be designed as per negotiations.

This portal can contain the site contain your logo and make reference to your own Academic Regulations and Guidebooks etc.

Q. 3 **Regarding internet reliability, what assurances do you offer that your portal is continually open and ready for student use?**

A. 3 DoctoralNet follows sound internet procedures as follows:

1. Users are informed by email when scheduled maintenance will occur.
2. Maintenance is scheduled, to the greatest extent possible, for a day and time which will cause the least likely inconvenience to students.
3. Unexpected outages are handled as soon as they come to our attention, the attention of our server on a 24/7 basis.

Q.4 **Will supervising faculty and personnel have access to the site?**

A.4 DoctoralNet encourages all supervisory personnel to access the full site. Our onboarding process, as negotiated to best meet your needs, may include:

1. Usernames and password set up for all personnel whose names are provided by your university.
2. Welcome webinars which may be watched by recording explaining the services and answering questions.
3. Open access to our staff by emails to answer questions.
4. Meeting with your Deans and Department Heads as appropriate to ensure open communication.

Q.5 **How are technical difficulties handled? Will there be a contact email or phone number for students who are having technical difficulties with the site?** We would not like to find ourselves in a position where all technical issues come via our office.

A.5 DoctoralNet maintains a strong customer service ethic, striving to meet students where they are on the net. These practices include:

1. A customer service email that is always answered within 24 hours.
2. Live chat on the site – open during extended business hours GMT and, as the university clientele grows – with an intention to become 24/7
3. Customer service response through DoctoralNet on both twitter and facebook.
4. We encourage you to broadcast these options in order to ensure you students do not come to you with these issues.

Q.6 **What do you suggest as far as meeting with students when they begin to use their subscription?** We would like two face-to-face sessions - ideally one in October and a second possibly in late January, is this possible?

A.6 We are happy to negotiate as many live trainings and contacts as you feel would be helpful. They are free of charge when conducted as a webinar. Travel and daily allowances are negotiated for on-site events at time of contract or as part of your purchase order.

In addition, we suggest that you plan for and encourage a few practices that help ensure engagement:

1. Your students are given their subscription with as strong as is possible requirement by you that they sign in once a month and report on their milestone progress.   This has proven to be a huge motivator to help students continue at a sufficient pace towards graduation and it allows our systems to catch them and reach out to offer help when they stumble and do not sign on.
2. Rather than a small link, your webmaster installs a widget provided by us directly to the site from whatever page they normally sign on. This serves as a visual reminder to them, and helps them adapt our services when they are new to their most used strategies.
3. You ask for and include a bit of news on our upcoming webinars, etc as part of the regular communication you have with students and supervisors.

Q. 7 **Would you be willing to produce a video/webinar overview for us?** Could a short video be put together which gives an overview of the site and makes reference to our university and our academic regulations etc.? This video could be used to show supervisors and to any students who miss the face to face sessions. I was thinking something short - maybe 3 - 5 minutes maximum.

A.7 We have videos of various times and for differing audiences and they are openly available to our customers, as are the series for special student needs such as our 30 day writing challenge.

1. We are happy to provide you with the demo videos we regularly produce, and to invite your staff and students to them as they are scheduled multiple times each month. We are even happy to schedule them at a time of your choosing to help ensure engagement.

2. Typically we recommend a set of four be used: one each for students in Phases 1-3 of their thesis work and one for supervisors as an overview of the site.
3. Three to five minutes is not usually enough time to cover the points needed – while we have those videos they are more of a commercial than useful for training.
4. We also are happy to invite anyone interested to our AskMeAnything conferences where we can address ideas and concerns from both the student and the administrator or professor level, again at your convenience when possible and if scheduled far enough ahead.
5. We can negotiate producing single videos which meet the needs of your university.

Q.8 **Evaluation and research: Obviously student feedback will be important.   We would like to be active partners in this regard.** We would be happy to work with you on surveys/focus groups etc. Would you be agreeable to this?

A.8 DoctoralNet is more than happy to work as co-researchers with the institutions who subscribe. Our mission is to advance PhD/doctoral completion rates and we are well versed in the academic literature on this topic.   We are constantly working to improve our dashboards and reporting mechanisms and are very pleased to develop other instruments with you.

We reserve the right to publish results aggregate results as taken across our university partnerships without your express permission. We will not mention your university by name or your individual data unless we are co-authoring research with you or without your permission. Likewise, your subscription pays for your student's use of our platform, and while we look forward to co-publishing research with you, this subscription does not extend to publication of data without approval. Please note this is not done to ensure only pleasing data be reported, on the contrary as researchers we all learn from data no matter the result, it is only to ensure that partial data is not misused by mistake.

Q.9 **We would like to see an activity report each month (number of sign-in's, resources used and any other data that can be populated from the site).** Is this possible?

A.9 DoctoralNet's policy is to provide these data twice a year to our subscription users.

We are happy to extent data sharing to universities who take a proactive stance in ensuring student engagement. Assuming that other steps are in place, such as a student requirement /suggestion by your university to sign in on a monthly basis and obvious links from your website to your portal on ours, we are happy to provide more regular data.

The logic behind this is that students do not use our services regularly as a matter of course, but tend to come "when they need it."   Left on their own, this is too often after they have needed it for a while. Because of your insistence that they check in, we all are better able to catch the student who has lost momentum earlier and to provide the aid they need.

There are other services which go with the DoctoralNet subscription which your students will have the opportunity to opt in to but which are not automatic. Encouraging them to consider these has been proven a successful strategy to keep them engaged. These include participation at least once during the year in the 30 day writing challenge, and signing up for the 365 motivational emails.

Q.10 **Regarding Financing - Our financial year runs to the end of September. We will be funding DoctoralNet from our next years budget so we'd like to hold off on payments until after the 1st of October.** Does this cause an issue for you?

A.10 We realize that large institutions have many procurement procedures and policies. As a small firm, we ask that our partners do what they can to ensure payment as quickly as possible.

Much depends on the length of time of the contract. We have more leeway for PO's written as a whole and paid all at once as the onboarding process begins or quickly thereafter than we do for PO's that require us to invoice after each in a series of pre-determined events take place.