University of St Mark & St John: Intuitive lecture capture aiding students’ learning

Summary

The University of St Mark & St John have piloted and installed lecture capture into classrooms as part of a cross-campus initiative to provide students with access to a greater breadth and depth of resources to aid their learning. The Panopto lecture capture system is enabling students to revisit any part of the lecture from the security and familiarity of their VLE, LearningSpace and has already proved to be very popular with staff and students.

About University of St Mark & St John

The University of St Mark & St John (Marjon) is located in the coastal city of Plymouth, south west England. There are around 2500 students, who study at the single campus University.

Offering Foundation Degrees & Progression Courses to Honours Degrees and Postgraduate study, the University was ranked 4th in the UK for student satisfaction with teaching quality in The Times Good University Guide 2014.
The most recent government statistics show that over 90% of their graduates are either in employment or continuing in higher education 6 months after graduation.

The University has recently invested £20 million into their campus and sports facilities, with refurbished student housing and a new student centre.

The challenge

Before the introduction of lecture capture, academic staff used a mixture of personal devices and centrally-loaned voice recorders to occasionally record sessions, delivering them as audio-only podcasts via the VLE. When provided, students used the recordings, but many struggled to match-up podcasts with in-class resources such as PowerPoint presentations and their own notes.

The main challenge was to find an alternative system of lecture capture that could be easily integrated into the classroom, which would be cost effective and provide staff with a system that was intuitive and easy to use, meaning it could be adopted by staff with minimal or no training. This was something that Adam Read, Senior e-Learning Technologist called the ‘no clicks’ approach.

Budgetary constraints meant that the system needed to be efficient and cost effective, so that it could eventually be deployed across the campus. Due to the increases in tuition fees, it is also important that the University is seen as a technology leader, continuing to invest in the overall student experience.

The activity

Adam was tasked with researching and delivering a system of lecture capture, which was seamless, intuitive and cost effective.

In order to do this he carried out a learning and teaching needs analysis, producing a project specification that identified the prominent requirements needed for the lecture capture system.

This identified that the system needed to:

- Require little or no intervention from staff
- Integrate into their Moodle VLE
- Be automated
- Easy to use
- Capture and synchronise on-screen content with voice

As part of this process the University spent a proportion of time speaking to other providers to find out how they had deployed lecture capture. Of particular interest were institutions who had implemented automated capture, the University of Essex were particularly helpful in sharing their experiences.

www.jiscrsc.ac.uk/case-studies
Following on from this initial phase the University identified that Panopto was a system that would likely meet the identified needs, and as a software-based solution meant it could be trialled using existing hardware.

The Panopto lecture capture system has the following features:

- Record and live stream video
- Screen capture and record
- Web casting
- Multi-camera video
- Schedule recordings
- Video management facilities with analytics
- Video editing
- API integration
- Watch recordings on any device

The e-Learning Team, headed by Adam, worked closely with Computing & Media Services to install Panopto into the most heavily-used teaching room on campus. They then targeted teaching staff that were due to deliver taught sessions in the pilot lecture capture classroom, inviting them to try out the new system.

Staff were introduced to the system, which was set up to capture high quality audio (using an in-ceiling microphone) as well as all the content displayed on the interactive whiteboard during the lecture. Once the session has been captured, it is uploaded to the Panopto service, where it is encoded and converted into the correct format and made available online, automatically embedded into the University VLE. Staff have additional editing options through the Panopto software, including easily topping and tailing video.

During the trial process the project team realised that the existing in-room laptop hardware was not sufficiently powerful to capture on-screen content while being used as a presentation tool during live sessions. The trial directly shaped the University lecture capture roll-out, resulting in an upgrade of the hardware specifications for Panopto-enabled rooms.

Following a successful trial the project team are continuing to roll out lecture capture across the campus, with another 7 rooms having been upgraded since the trial. The institution has committed to implementing lecture capture technology in to all teaching rooms by early 2014/15.

**The outcomes**

One of the main outcomes for the project and the adoption of the new lecture capture system has been the ease of use of the software for staff.

“We developed a system and workflow that means staff can essentially walk into a room and deliver and students have access to a high quality recording of the session, all housed within the familiar VLE interface, within an hour or two hours of the end of the session.” – Adam Read, Senior e-Learning Technologist
The main benefits of the lecture capture system are:

- Students have unlimited access to the entire recorded lecture through their VLE
- If a student is unwell or unable to attend the lecture for other reasons, they know that they can catch up at a later date
- Students can re-visit the lecture and any areas that they had difficulty understanding. The system can therefore be used to strengthen and develop a student’s own note-taking.
- The simplicity and automated nature of the system means that staff can have their lectures captured without needing to load any software or attend lengthy training courses.

For students with certain learning difficulties, such as dyslexia, the lecture capture system provides an opportunity to access content in an accessible format wherever and whenever it is needed, helping to meet their preferred learning styles. Some students struggle to take notes while also listening to content in a lecture, so providing both the audio track, synchronised with on-screen content offers an invaluable tool to support their learning.

“Essentially it’s running itself – so from a technical point of view it requires very little support once you can get it setup.” – Adam Read, Senior e-Learning Technologist

Another benefit for using Panopto is that captured content is available to access through a student’s own smartphone, iPod or tablet, which means that learners can listen to a lecture on the bus or at any place time that suits them.

The impact

It’s a lecture in their pocket and that’s something that many staff already feel is of real benefit to Marjon students.

“I consider this to be potentially the best development in enabling students to achieve their learning goals as they can revisit (an approximation) of the cognitive environment ‘in their own time and pace’ of where they have already successfully integrated the information, i.e: in the live session. This link (understanding in one place and later in another) is critical. In the past we have been restricted to books for reinforcement, but we are not programmed to receive primary information in this way, at least most undergraduate level students aren’t.” – Dr Steve Disney, Senior Lecturer

“The format lends itself perfectly to demonstrating charting procedures for linguistic and phonological analysis and, what I haven’t done yet but would like too shortly, talking through charted data pulling out relevant observations. This is the bit that I know my students would benefit from being able to revisit in their own time after class.” – Dr Sally Bates, Senior Lecturer
Although it’s early days for the project, students are already viewing the lectures captured by Panopto

The lessons learned

One thing that the statistics are showing is that the students tend to access or watch only a part of the lecture and not the whole lecture, this could suggest that there may be areas of the lecture that were difficult to follow. Adam feels that this could be a useful indicator to highlight any points in the lecture that were not as clear as they could have been.

“Actively seek out other organisations that are actually using lecture capture already – I think by speaking to them you can only save time and you’re going to get some really honest opinions about systems and hardware.” – Adam Read, Senior e-Learning Technologist

Useful links

University of St Mark & St John

Jisc RSC South West

Panopto

Tutor Checklist for lecture capture

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