CASE STUDY

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College

Utilising videoconferencing technology to enhance teaching and support learning.

Shrewsbury Sixth Form College (SSFC) was established 32 years ago and currently has over 1500 students, between the ages of 16 and 19, studying A Levels and GCSEs.

The college has been embracing videoconferencing technology for over three years and, during an average week, students have access to one or two conferences.

Sian Squire, Subject Head of Classical Civilisation, is at the forefront of organising the videoconferences – many of which come via Virtually University, a Janet registered content provider. The breadth of topics available via the VC Content Directory are substantial. In the first three months of 2013, SSFC students have had the opportunity to engage in conferences ranging from Biomedical Science and Biology to Healthcare and Business Studies.

Partnership with Sheffield University

One of SSFC’s initiatives is an award-winning collaboration with Sheffield University, which allows students to link directly and experience university level lectures, as well as engage with undergraduates. Through this interaction, students are able to see the differences between courses. A strong focus on languages has seen an increase in this declining subject – with students discovering some courses they didn’t even know existed, like Czechoslovakian and Finnish.

Sian says: “We won a Janet award in 2011 for our partnership with Sheffield University, and in 2012 we were awarded ‘Best Collaboration’ by Janet. We’re aiming for a hatrick in 2013!”

SSFC currently houses two sets of equipment. However expansion plans for 2014 will see the college moving to two sites, giving further videoconferencing capabilities, with dedicated suites for students to access even more conferences, on a regular basis. The positive impact this technology has on students, and the opportunities it opens up for them, is evident in the numbers attending. Sian publicises the available conferences and, although sometimes lecturers put forward students, for the main part students attend voluntarily and in their own time.

“We think of videoconferencing as ‘enrichment’.”

Sian Squire, Subject Area Head of Classical Civilisation, Shrewsbury Sixth Form College.
Business connections and global opportunities

The opportunities videoconferencing brings stretch even further, with businesses and global connections. Sian says: “One particularly exciting event that was made possible because we use videoconferencing was when we were contacted by a school in Northern France, about Wilfred Owen, who was born in our town and died in theirs. After a staff-to-staff conference with them, they invited 14 of our pupils to go there for Remembrance Day – completely free! We’re doing another exchange with them this year.”

SSFC’s History department had another international link in 2012, with America, as part of their American Civil War studies. Through contact with Janet they took part in a conference with American students, exchanging views from during the civil war from both American and English points of view.

Sian says: “Videoconferencing opens up contacts, connections and unlimited growth and opportunities.”

Businesses too, use videoconferencing as a way of connecting with the college and its students. Recently, Barclays held a conference about graduate loans, offering a sponsored degree. As a result of this conference, one of the students from SSFC had an interview for the Barclays sponsored degree scheme.

Find out more about the Janet Videoconferencing service

Janet Videoconferencing gives you the power to develop relationships with other organisations without leaving your classroom. You can enhance teaching by collaborating with other schools and colleges to bring a real understanding and depth to subjects. A dedicated website lists all the videoconferencing sessions offered by Janet registered content providers: http://vccontentdirectory.ja.net

It’s not just in the classroom that Janet Videoconferencing adds real value. The technology can save you money, especially if your campuses are geographically spread out and staff travel between them.

Contact the Janet Videoconferencing Service team today and find out how we can help you enhance the student experience at your organisation.

To learn more, visit the Janet Videoconferencing website: https://www.ja.net/video

“The videoconferencing team at Janet are incredibly helpful and friendly. They deal with all sorts of requests from us involving both complex technical issues and simple issues.”

Sian Squire