

Opinion Pieces

Panopto with Moodle: Enabling videos and screencasts to be effective assessment tools for all

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Abstract

The widespread availability in universities of modern video recording and management systems integrated into Virtual Learning Environments, such as Panopto with Moodle, now enables all students to create their own recordings easily and submit them for assessment; the platform makes management of the marking and feedback simple and effective. It is time that lecturers embraced this development, so that assessment remains effective and relevant. The ability to create a screencast or video for assessment should be an essential digital literacy skill for all university students.

There have been some attempts at universities to assess students on the basis of screencasts made by them to demonstrate their work: for example, by Shafer (2010), for mathematics, and University of Reading (2015), for digital design. However, until quite recently, the facility for students to record their own presentations or demonstrations of their work has been limited to those with the necessary technical skills to set up microphones and cameras and to access and use appropriate software (e.g. Camtasia). Making these recordings available to staff for assessment has often been hampered by large file sizes, a variety of file formats and the lack of a suitable management framework. Hosting files on such external services as YouTube, Vimeo and Jing has made this rather easier, but issues of security and data protection may lead to difficulties, whilst the management of the whole process is time-consuming and fraught with problems. There can also be issues with maximum file size or video-duration limits.

Modern video recording and management systems integrated into Virtual Learning Environments, such as Panopto with Moodle, now make it feasible for lecturers to expect their students to create and submit their own recordings for assessment, whilst the platform makes management of marking and feedback simple and effective. Students can normally see only what they have uploaded and can upload multiple times. There are no practical limits on file size. All recordings are date-stamped and identified by the user's authenticated ID. Lecturers can easily view all the recordings for the course and give feedback viewable only by the student. Depending on settings, students can extend the visibility of recordings to other users for peer assessment or group access. Similarly, lecturers can extend the visibility of individual recordings to other lecturers for moderation and to external examiners and others for quality assurance.

As these platforms become commonplace, there are many advantages to the institution: such systems are already widely used by staff for recording lectures, providing screencast feedback and implementing flipped classrooms. However, their use by students for recording is more limited. Students now have the tools for easily creating screencasts - to record a demonstration of a system they have built, to produce a critical evaluation of a website or to present their ideas or the results of their research. Video recording, using Panopto on mobile

devices, of presentations, interviews or performances is also possible. Adding video to a screencast may help ensure the authenticity of assessment, particularly if all students have previously recorded a short personal introduction (as part of induction to the institution) that may provide comparison. Assessment can be either formative or summative, with easy facilities for lecturers to give context-specific feedback.

These platforms give many advantages to students over alternative assessment methods. The skills they gain enable them to produce video CVs or online demonstrations for prospective employers. Viewing their own recordings is an excellent opportunity to reflect on their own skills and to try out new ideas. The process of recording is simple and uploading can be automated. There are no issues with file sizes and students can manage their own uploads by renaming or deleting them or making them available to others for review or sharing. They can even download recordings as MP4 files for indefinite local storage.

One of the authors has used Panopto with Moodle for several years as an assessment tool for both final-year undergraduate students and Masters students. End-of-course feedback showed that students had little difficulty in making the recordings and all met the deadline for uploading. They used their own laptops or personal computers (Windows or Mac) and found the recording and uploading process easy. Most did just one unedited recording, a few made several attempts before they were satisfied with the result and some even edited and annotated their recording for effect.

The other authors of this article were Masters students on one of these courses. Panopto screencasts having proved very effective, they subsequently recorded screencasts themselves to support their own individual final project reports. They also experimented with video recording, finding it a useful preparation for video interviews and a confidence-builder for their presentation skills.

In conclusion, we recommend that the ability to create a screencast or video for assessment should be an essential digital literacy skill for all university students. From September 2016, all Masters students in the CIS department will be introduced to Panopto at the start of their studies and will be required to record a short video to illustrate how to pronounce their name (both formal and informal) and to introduce themselves. This will replace an existing ten-year-old departmental system requiring all Masters students to upload a sound recording of the pronunciation of their name – of great value to lecturers as most Masters students at Greenwich are from overseas and many have unfamiliar names. Experience has shown that engagement with students is significantly enhanced when lecturers know how to pronounce student names and also when they know how students wish to be addressed. Panopto (2016) case studies show a variety of ways in which Panopto can be used for student assessment – lecturers may well be encouraged to explore their own ideas as well.

Reference list

Panopto (2016) "Student Recording: Allow your students to present their assignments in a way that's both interactive and imaginative." Available at: www.panopto.com/uses/student-recording/ (Accessed: 13 March 2016).

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University of Reading (2015) "Experimenting with screencasts as an assessment tool." Available at: <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/grass/blog/2015/06/04/experimenting-with-screencasts-as-an-assessment-tool/> (Accessed: 2 April 2016).