

# University of St Mark and St John

Find out how one university in Plymouth turned a challenge with lecture scheduling into an opportunity to improve teaching and learning for all their students.

## A snapshot of the challenge

Last year, Adam Read, Senior e-Learning Technologist at the University of St Mark and St John (also known as Marjon), was contacted by two Deans of Faculty who presented him with a challenge. They had just been in discussions with the student union who had expressed concern that a number of scheduled lectures clashed with important sporting fixtures. While this might not be a particular issue for other universities, at which the lecture would automatically take precedence, at the University of St Mark and St John the situation was a little different.

Marjon has one of the most comprehensive programmes of sports participation, performance, education and research in the UK and is renowned for its world-class facilities. Sport, therefore, is an integral part of their identity as an institution, and a number of their students represent the university up to international level. With the university keen to promote participation in sporting activities as part of the wider student experience, it was important to find a resolution to the lecture scheduling issue that would suit the needs of both academics and students.

The idea of implementing campus-wide lecture capture was put forward as a possible solution, allowing students to catch up on anything they might miss because of their sporting commitments. Adam Read's role as the learning technologist responsible for advising on such technologies meant that he was tasked with assessing how lecture capture could both address this problem and add value to their students more generally.



## About St Mark and St John

With over 170 years of heritage, tradition and experience, the University of St Mark and St John (also known as Marjon) has travelled a long road to become a University. From its roots as a teacher training college, the institution now offers a wide range of courses from Foundation Degrees and Progression Courses to Honours Degrees and Postgraduate study options. Marjon has built a reputation for being 'small and friendly', which was reflected in their achievement of 91% for Student Satisfaction in the 2013 National Student Survey. The university has also recently invested £20 million in their campus and sports facilities.

Total enrolment: 2,500

Website: [www.marjon.ac.uk](http://www.marjon.ac.uk)

## Getting started with Panopto

The first step towards putting in place a robust lecture capture system was for Adam to create a detailed project specification, in close collaboration with the Deans.

This process identified two key requirements:

- Automation: it was important that any system could run with little-to-no intervention from academic staff
- Integration: it was equally critical that the lecture capture system should work seamlessly with their Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) — Moodle.

These requirements were then used to identify possible solutions. During this evaluation process, Adam actively sought feedback from other universities that had already implemented lecture capture — particularly from the University of Essex, which records all of its lectures across the entire university. Following on from this initial 'discovery' phase, the University identified Panopto as the system that could meet its needs.

Marjon began a pilot with Panopto by kitting out a heavily-used lecture room and asking academics to try the solution out. For most staff, a key part of Panopto's appeal was that their lecture could be automatically recorded and then made available to students in the familiar VLE setting within an hour or so. This whole process took place without any additional work on their part.

## The initial results

Although the University is still relatively early on in their use of lecture capture, they've already got a solution and workflow that allows an academic to simply walk into a lecture theatre, deliver their presentation as normal and students can then use the existing VLE interface to access a high-quality recording of that lecture within an hour of the session ending. This means that any technical barriers to adoption are minimal. With this 'no-clicks' approach, it is much easier to get academic staff buy-in. In Adam's words: "essentially Panopto is running itself — so from a technical point of view it requires very little support once you can get it set-up."

The benefits they've seen reach far beyond solving the institution's initial challenge around students missing lectures because of sports fixtures. As well as giving all students a chance to review learning materials as many times as they need to, university staff think that it will be particularly useful for students with learning difficulties, such as dyslexia.



“With Panopto we've been able to develop a system and workflow that means staff can essentially walk into a room and deliver their lecture as usual and students have access to a high quality recording of the session, all housed within the familiar VLE interface, within an hour or two of the end of the session.”

— **Adam Read**, Senior e-Learning Technologist,  
University of St Mark and St John

## Next steps

Following the success of the pilot project, Adam and his team are currently in the process of rolling Panopto out across a further 17 classrooms. Marjon plans to have lecture capture available in every teaching room on campus by the start of the 2014/15 academic year and also want to make Panopto available on all staff machines, so they can record educational materials whenever, wherever.

In addition, lecture recording opens up new possibilities for their learning content. For instance, it offers them the chance to make their educational materials available beyond the confines of the university, will enable them to support flipped classroom teaching practices and may even help them develop MOOC content in the future.”

“I consider this to be potentially the best development in enabling students to achieve their learning goals.”

— **Dr Steve Disney**, Senior Lecturer,  
University of St Mark and St John