

Lancaster University

Using Panopto to live broadcast lectures at Lancaster University

The Digital Technologies Unit at Lancaster University began piloting Panopto's lecture capture and video management solution in 2012. Their initial plan was to focus on rolling Panopto out at one of their facilities as a pilot and to use the system to allow students to review lectures they had attended on-demand — something that both students and lecturers had been requesting.

However, when one of their academics asked for a short-term technical fix to allow him to deliver his oversubscribed lecture series to all the students who had signed up, they discovered that Panopto was also agile enough to help the University fulfil student demand in ways they hadn't anticipated.

A snapshot of the challenge

October 2012: a new university term is about to start.

A lecturer discovers one of his classes has struck a chord with students and is proving incredibly popular. The only problem is that the room booked for the class can only hold 300 students and 350 want to sign up. The question is, how can the university make sure the extra 50 students can access the same lecture content as those in the main lecture theatre?

An obvious solution is to set up a temporary overflow class. But as the class is due to run two to three times a week, having to set up a link with manual equipment multiple times a week will involve several members of staff and the team does not have this resource to spare. The question for the Digital Technologies Team is: can they find a way to make the temporary overflow class work so that all of their students are happy without placing an untenable burden on their staff?

With the term about to start, David Neal, Digital Technologies Engineer suggests trying Panopto's live broadcasting functionality as their fix while they make longer-term arrangements.



About Lancaster

Lancaster University is a world-class centre for teaching and research located in the North West of England. The University places great emphasis on a strong student experience and employability and gives students access to academics who are experts in their field. Lancaster's community extends far beyond the campus with research, teaching and student exchange partnerships with leading universities and institutions in 24 countries globally.

Total enrolment: 12,525

Website: www.lancaster.ac.uk

The Panopto solution

Reflecting on what happened next, David Neal comments: “We needed a quick and easy way to connect students with the lecturers’ content while we worked on a longer-term plan and Panopto seemed to offer us the best way forward. Obviously, as we hadn’t originally intended to use Panopto for live event broadcasting, we were curious to see whether it would deliver what we needed.

“What we found was that it was incredibly easy to use — I just opened up the Panopto Recorder as usual and ticked the box that said ‘broadcast and record’. This auto-generated a URL which we could then simply pull up in the overflow room to let the students there see essentially all the same things as those in the main lecture room — video of the lecturer, audio, his powerpoint slides; everything.

“With the Panopto solution, we only needed one member of the team to make sure the URL was playing in the overflow venue (and to tick the box!), it really took no time at all.”

Future plans with Panopto

Following the success of live broadcasting, David Neal’s team plans to roll out Panopto across the whole university, primarily for its original intended purpose as a lecture capture tool. The new challenge will be doing this at a pace lecturers can absorb, ensuring they feel comfortable with the technology. The Digital Technologies Team believes that Panopto’s remote recorder will play a key role here — allowing them to schedule lecture capture centrally and removing the burden from academics entirely.

The fact that recordings go to a private folder that only lecturers have access to before they are made public through the Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) will also help the adoption process, reassuring lecturers that they can review their content before students can.

The university also wants to trial different set-ups, for instance by using a camera with an operator in conjunction with Panopto to achieve different effects with the solution.



“With just a couple of clicks, lecturers can share their content with whatever groups they want to reach. This is a big relief for our academics... it means they retain control over their course material.”

— **David Neal**, Digital Technologies Engineer, Lancaster University

“Everyone involved with the pilot of Panopto was pleased with its flexibility and reliability.”

— **David Neal**, Digital Technologies Engineer, Lancaster University