

# St. Mary's University

## Tenderising the Tendering Process



St. Mary's University continues to build upon its 170-year history of teaching excellence through a consistent emphasis on training and best practices. After identifying that lecture capture had become increasingly popular throughout higher education and among the student body, St. Mary's University initiated its search for a solution in 2019. Representatives from the Student Union, technical staff, and academics formed a working group to collaboratively assess their needs.

Bing Choong, Head of Technology Enhanced Learning, brought her experience with lecture capture to help guide the working group. Aiming to develop foundational knowledge on lecture capture and evaluate each solution's uses and strengths, St. Mary's hosted a supplier event with the six most prominent video management providers and gathered faculty feedback to inform the structure of the forthcoming tender.

The challenge:

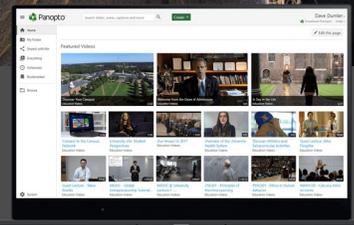
## Tendering in Unfamiliar Territory

Having learned about lecture capture, the working group proceeded to assess their needs and determine non-negotiable minimum requirements. Recalling the resistance of academics during their initial search, the working group recognised the necessity for ease of use and intuitive design.

The minimum literacy technical proficiency requirements, therefore, had to be relatively basic. "We really wanted to minimise the number of steps or clicks to perform tasks," commented Choong. Despite identifying ease-of-use and accessibility as key priorities for their use case, St. Mary's University was unwilling to compromise on functionality.

Throughout St. Mary's campus, teaching spaces and AV equipment are varied and multipurpose in use and design. Unfortunately, internet connectivity could be equally as varied. The University accordingly sought a platform that was hardware agnostic and did not require persistent online connectivity to ensure equal functionality and access, both campus-wide and off-campus.

In order to get a comprehensive assessment of usability, the working group chose not to rely on verbal answers and screenshots alone. Instead, St. Mary's took a hands-on approach. "As part of the tender process, we requested trial accounts," Choong explained.



## About St. Mary's University

St. Mary's University was established in 1850 to educate the growing number of poor Catholic children, with an initial intake of six students. Demand for Catholic teachers grew over time, as did the student body, leading to further campus expansions and elevated to university status in 2014.

St. Mary's University now educates 6,000 undergraduate and post-graduate students. Along with the preservation of its rich heritage, St. Mary's remains committed to teaching excellence with around a third of its offering dedicated to teacher education.

Participating suppliers granted St. Mary's University two-week trials. To standardise testing, the working group devised tasks for staff to perform without prior training. If staff were unable to intuitively upload files or create short videos, the training required could create a usage barrier and diminish adoption at launch.

The University then short-listed three providers for individual interviews about adoption and service. "Service was a big factor for us, as it's the first time we were launching something to be used University-wide. We didn't just want a product, but a service provider," Choong explained.

Panopto's support team and user community are the largest in the UK, giving St. Mary's University the post-purchase support they desired and access to a community where best practices, market trends, and improvement suggestions are freely shared.

Upon completion of the tender, technical trials, individual interviews, and a final discussion summit, St. Mary's University ultimately selected Panopto as their trusted solution.

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St. Mary's University*

The solution:

## Seamless Launch and Customised Courses

Panopto was launched in January 2020. The institution began with a small-scale pilot, installing Panopto within a limited number of rooms to get a sense of how it could be rolled out campus-wide and to introduce staff to its functionality.

"The implementation and integration of Panopto were quite straightforward. It felt seamless from my end. We didn't have any problems," commented Choong.

Although the technical rollout proceeded smoothly, lecturers remained hesitant and concerns about being replaced by their recordings surfaced. Choong reassured staff that the recordings were to be viewed as teaching and learning tools with an emphasis on accessibility and revision. "We did a lot of work on messaging to staff about what lecture capture means for them, but the students didn't need convincing. They got really excited about it," Choong commented.

St Mary's chose not to enforce mandatory adoption. Instead, the institution encouraged lecturers to use Panopto to create short-form content, such as introductory videos on key topics, or lecture summaries.

Using Panopto's analytics, St. Mary's lecturers saw growing engagement with their content. They noticed large viewing spikes nearing exams; students were relying on Panopto for revision. Lecturers, therefore, began creating videos that catered to student preferences on topics, and even duration. Panopto's captioning and subtitles also proved valuable in catering to student requirements by enhancing digital accessibility and content discoverability.

Having gained further confidence using Panopto to record, edit, and better cater to student needs, St. Mary's progressed into recording lectures.

The results:

## Unprecedented Adoption and Adaptation

Having launched Panopto campus-wide in January 2020, St. Mary's was well-equipped to adapt to the unforeseen mandatory lockdowns brought about by COVID-19. "Starting the week of March 22nd, everything was going online. Within a week we were rolling out training on how to use Panopto," Choong recounted.

Initially, there was some confusion during St. Mary's rapid online conversion, as staff were using a variety of platforms to communicate and share content with students. Choong and her team narrowed down the accepted platforms by making their VLE, Moodle, a centralized hub. Utilising integrations with Panopto and Zoom created a clear channel for communication and course content.

"To be able to record live sessions in Zoom, have them stored easily within Panopto, and retrieve them in Moodle served as a one-stop-shop," noted Choong on the ease and simplicity afforded to lecturers via Panopto's integrations.

Despite the unprecedented circumstances, Choong reports that some lecturers have said that they have seen higher engagement and would like to retain some of these practices. “Normally, if they ran a tutorial on campus for a class of 15, maybe 5 would attend, but now it’s around 12 attendees.”

“We also have a high percentage of commuter students at 53%, so Panopto has had a huge impact on student retention since the move online,” added Choong.

The move to an online-only format also played a role in how effectively St Mary’s business functions responded to the enforced lockdowns. The Finance team adopted Panopto to replace face-to-face training and orient new staff to their systems and processes. St. Mary’s internal Marketing department also proceeded to transfer all content from other video platforms to Panopto for enhanced and efficient digital accessibility.

Faculties throughout St. Mary’s University soon followed suit, and Panopto’s adoption is widespread. Through meticulous tendering and testing, St. Mary’s flawlessly launched an easily accessible and growing library of course content and a powerful, intuitive, and adaptable platform from which students securely self-serve, and staff intuitively iterate.

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