LEARNING FUTURES PROGRAMME

FINAL REPORT

All Ears? – Developing a formative and summative feed-forward tool

Oldham College

PARTNER ORGANISATIONS

Edge Hill University

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Project title
All Ears? – Developing a formative and summative feed-forward tool.

Name of lead organisation
Oldham College

Project summary
Screencasting software allows a user to record their computer screen alongside an audio narration. This project set out to explore and develop the use of screencasting applied to assessment feedback for students. We wanted to see if the use of screencast feedback by tutors would:

- Improve perception and use of feedback by students;

- Reduce the time spent giving feedback to students;

- Result in more detailed and targeted feedback;

- Demonstrate the impact of situated feedback;

- Enhance the literacy skills of students by visually showing them where they need to concentrate on specific aspects of spelling and/or grammar.

Alongside this, the project aimed to develop the skills and confidence of staff to create eLearning resources and to use eAssessment feedback effectively and efficiently. Informed by feedback from our own tutors' experience of the project we have created an online CPD resource that will guide others through this process.

Who should read this report and why
- Practitioners wishing to increase and enhance their use of technology and individual skills;
- Tutors looking at delivering assessment feedback in an innovative way with the potential to further engage their students;
- Organisations looking to maximise the engagement of students in utilising electronic feedback systems;
- Managers who are looking for efficient and effective student achievement and progress reporting systems;

- Tutors looking to highlight literacy improvements on student work e.g. spelling, punctuation and grammar.

CPD resources developed

A Xerte eLearning object containing:

- Exemplar video assessment feedback;
- A guide on how to create a screencast (video version);
- A guide on how to create a screencast (pdf version);
- Sample screencasting webinar recordings;
- Feedback from those directly involved in the project;
- Rationale for the use of Screencasting as a formative assessment tool.

Project lead contact details

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About Oldham College

Our curriculum

Oldham College offers an extensive range of qualifications in a variety of areas including business services, creative arts, care and early years, construction and engineering, creative service industries and English and Maths.

Apprenticeships and traineeships are also offered. The College is proud to have strong links with businesses and organisations in the region who offer the community meaningful and essential work, education and training opportunities.

Currently, the College welcomes over 10,000 students studying over 900 courses. We have an excellent reputation for developing students' skills, with a high progression rate into further study, employment or Higher Education. This is reflected by the number of students who progress to university, with over 500 students progressing to higher education last year.

Our family

Oldham College is part of a larger 'family' offering education from primary to university level; from entry level to degrees. We are delighted to sponsor Stoneleigh Academy, a local primary school, Waterhead Academy, a local secondary school and we manage University Campus Oldham.

Members of partnership

Oldham College

Edge Hill University

What the project set out to do and why

Based on research and practice conducted by Edge Hill University the project set out to develop and explore the use of screencast feedback and how it could enhance the student perception and use of tutor feedback within the FE sector. The project aimed to provide an efficient and effective assessment mechanism that would link directly into current electronic tracking systems.

Specifically the challenge was to research whether the use of screencasting and video assessment feedback would:

- Increase the volume of specific feedback given to individuals;

- Change the qualitative nature of feedback;

- Improve student perception and use of feedback.

The process

We created a group of tutors from different faculties in the College working across different levels to assess if there would be any difference in perception, uptake, usage and satisfaction in using screencast feedback. In total there were 15 tutors working across levels 1 – 3 in curriculum areas:

- Hairdressing & Beauty Therapy;

- Early Years;

- Access to Higher Education;

- Sport & Travel;

- Business Studies.

We developed the project with Edge Hill University where screencast feedback has been piloted and evaluated with students over a number of years. Edge Hill assisted the College by providing an academic rationale for the use of screencasting as a formative tool and by delivering initial training for staff in the use of the software. College staff planned and implemented their own use of screencasting using a reflective action research paradigm.

The project sought to capture tutor practice in producing video feedback as well as the affective impact the process had on the tutors and students involved.

Why screencast-o-matic?

To create the videos we decided to use the online software Screencast-O-Matic (www.screencast-o-matic.com). There are numerous screen casting/capture tools available but Screencast-O-Matic was chosen because it:

1. Is accessible fully online;

2. Does not require any specific software installation;

3. Enables video recordings to be saved in .mp4 format;

4. Provides an option to save and upload direct to YouTube;

5. Has local application availability for use without Internet connection.

Ongoing 1-to-1 support

As part of the project we provided a Champion to provide ongoing 1-to-1 support to tutors to develop their confidence and skills in using screencasting. Julie Harding, the College's Resource Based Learning Manager, supported staff with video creation and with the uploading of videos. She also acted as a critical friend reviewing the quality of the resources produced.

Student access

The project explored various methods of storing the videos for student access. These included:

*   Via email;

*   On Moodle course pages linked to instructional vocational videos which were also produced as part of the project;

*   YouTube links;

*   Direct upload to VITAL the College's electronic tracking system;

*   Links to the College ePortfolio systems.

In the majority of cases the preferred option for student access was via VITAL.

The results

Challenges overcome
The majority of staff and students stated that they preferred the use of video assessment feedback compared to the more traditional approach of written feedback. There was some

evidence of an increase in the frequency of student feedback use as evidenced by the comments below.

The use of an internal project champion and meetings ensured that the staff were engaged throughout. The champion was invaluable in ensuring staff were able to receive support as and when they needed. Without this support there was a risk that the project could have been affected by time constraints and difficulties accessing software and other technical issues.

Students

- *"I prefer this feedback rather than written feedback as it is more personal to me and my writing. I can listen to the feedback over and over again to get the next part right."*

- *"Much easier to understand and I can always go back for future points to help towards other assignments."*

- *"I listened to the feedback once and understood what I needed to do in order to achieve a higher grade."*

- *"I listened and acknowledged my strengths and weaknesses."*

- *"I watched the feedback several times and found it very useful."*

- *"I looked at my mark first to see my grade then looked and listened to my comments to see how I can improve my work if needed."*

Students reported that they felt their tutors had taken more time to provide feedback which made them feel valued. They also felt that the feedback was more detailed and was supported by clear examples.

Staff

Tutors identified that producing screencasts was relatively straightforward and was more time efficient than written feedback. However, finding a quiet space to record a screencast could be problematic, sometimes disrupting their work patterns:-

- *"[Screencasting was…] Much less time consuming using the video feedback compared to written feedback."*
- *"Screencast-O-Matic is quite straightforward once you have completed one, but it is too noisy in staff rooms, had to do video at home."*

Tutors reflected upon their students reactions and generally found these to be very positive. They highlighted the helpful situated nature of comments i.e. students being able to see what the tutor was looking at and hear what they thought. They also identified

differences in the way that students felt about assessment because of voice intonation cues.

- *"Students liked the video feedback as they could see the mark sheets at the same time. It just made it that little bit easier for them."*
- *"Students don't understand the nuances within written feedback, whereas if they listen to our voices and the way we talk it through, they can actually find out exactly what we are trying to get through to them and the points we were trying to make."*

One tutor identified specific difficulties in using this method because of examination board expectations regarding how controlled assessments could be carried out – however these would be likely to apply to many feedback mechanisms and are not exclusive to screencasting.

- *"I found the video feedback really helpful and the majority of learners preferred this to the normal written feedback. If it was integrated within the BTEC guidelines then I would use it for all marking as it takes less time than written feedback and I can cover the assessment on a more personal note for the learner".*

Awarding bodies

Overall, we did not encounter any difficulties with awarding bodies in the use of using the technology for assessment feedback. However, the recent changes in BTEC guidelines meant that staff working in this area had to give less feedback both paper-based and video than previously. One comment from an awarding body was:

- *"Good recording identifying where each learning objective was met."*

College Governor

- *"Thank you for arranging for me to visit the Learning Resource Centre to observe how students are starting to receive video assessment feedback. The student was watching a personalised video clip of her tutor giving a detailed overview of the assessment that had been submitted.*

    The student said it was a great way to receive her feedback as it allowed her to get a better understanding as she could play the video several times whilst seeing the changes the tutor was recommending.

    In my opinion this is another positive step forward in the College's approach to develop independent learners whilst having the potential to save marking time for our tutors."

Impact identified

Dedicated training, ongoing support and time provided for staff to attend sessions has had a positive impact on the staff involved. The majority of tutor logs showed that the time spent giving feedback was less using the video assessment method whilst more words were used. All the curriculum areas involved in the project are looking to develop further their use of video assessment feedback.

Students participating state they like accessing the video assessment feedback and have started to spend more time utilising additional eLearning resources. This has led to ongoing development of eResources specifically by tutors directly involved in this project. Twenty instructional videos have been embedded into Moodle to support and deliver independent study in learning programmes. In addition, an online unit has been developed for Level Three Business Studies covering Development Planning for Career in Business.

As part of the student induction process an interactive video resource was produced showing students how to access Learning Resources across the College.

After the initial training and development period staff reported that the completion of the screencast feedback was quicker than providing written feedback for the majority of the work they marked. This provided an extrinsic motivation for staff to select screencast feedback in preference to traditional feedback methods.

Students preferred receiving screencast feedback because they found tutor comments easy to understand and they could hear the intention behind the comments via the voice intonation of the tutors.

Whilst not directly mentioning this project the College's recent Ofsted report highlighted good use of ILT, the Virtual Learning Environment and VITAL the electronic tracking system. In addition we have had over 90% satisfaction from students when asked if eLearning helped them on their course.

Whilst working on the project we also identified that the use of Office365 and collaborative learning tools, file sharing would add additional value to our e-assessment strategy. Supported by the Learning Futures Programme who provided us with industry mentors from Microsoft and Risual Ltd the College has integrated Office365 into current systems and created accounts for all staff and students. There was no additional cost to the College as this was all available as part of our standard Microsoft Select agreement.

Key learning points

Initially, we spent too much time working on the technology and software trying to find an optimal solution, especially around how the final screencasts would be deployed to students. With hindsight we could have chosen one solution and worked on it as the outcome would have been the same. However, the process we adopted did have a positive effect as it engaged curriculum staff with other aspects of eLearning such as

Moodle development, creation of vocational instructional videos, YouTube tools and other online software.

To repeat the project I would recommend the creation of a project group with a range of practitioners from across the organisation. Ensure that you set clear milestones and provide set times for the group to meet which are supported by senior managers. During this period be clear about the training that is taking place and the aims/objectives you want to achieve.

Provide a Champion who can provide 1-to-1 support for staff. This will enable those involved to overcome any barriers quickly and efficiently without having to wait or waste time. Where possible harness and utilise existing organisational systems to save time on learning new ways of working and to avoid duplication.

We are now looking at sustaining the work we have undertaken by widening its use across curriculum areas. The plan is to support staff involved in the project to act as champions who will upskill colleagues in their own areas who have not yet been involved. Furthermore, we are embarking on a number of projects looking at screencasting to deliver internal CPD. This will enable us to provide training with clear and consistent messaging to all staff, which will save both time and money. In addition it will allow staff to receive and use the blended eLearning training/resources that we are providing to our students.

Resources

All project resources have been developed into a single eLearning object using Xerte which can be accessed here: www.oldham.ac.uk/allears/fill/

The resource is a full CPD guide to the project providing:

1. **A rationale for the use of screencasting as a formative assessment tool (pdf)**
   Research undertaken by EdgeHill University capturing the experiences of tutors and students in using screencast feedback compared to more "traditional" electronic text.

2. **Exemplar video assessment feedback**
   A range of actual video assessment feedback files created by Oldham College staff and used with their students. This allows practitioners to experience first-hand what the student experiences. It also models the different ways in which staff have provided feedback, for example with a split screen showing the member of staff, the assignment and links to the assessment brief.

3. **Creating a Screencast (video version)**
   An introductory guide detailing how to create your own video assessment feedback. Using Screencast-O-Matic this resource shows step-by-step how video assessment

feedback was created by tutors involved in the project.

4. **Creating a Screencast (pdf version)**
   A pdf version of the video guide listed above.

5. **Screencasting webinar recording**
   A recording of a webinar delivered by Oldham College on behalf of the Learning Futures programme giving practical examples of how screencasts can be used effectively with staff and learners. During this recording you will also receive helpful hints and tips to maximise the impact of screencasting on teaching, learning and assessment.