

## Case Study

# Beyond Lecture Capture: Aberystwyth University Turns to Panopto to Enhance the Traditional Lecture

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### Aberystwyth University At a Glance

**Location:**  
Wales, U.K.

**Total Enrollment:**  
12,000

**Web Site:**  
[www.aber.ac.uk](http://www.aber.ac.uk)

To evaluate the importance of Aberystwyth University's new lecture capture solution, all one must do is look at the Panopto viewing history. According to this history, many students have watched Aberystwyth's new lecture recordings extensively, especially during the week leading up to exams.

"We are just finishing an exam period now in January," said Tim Davies, desktop systems manager for the Information Services Department of Aberystwyth University. "Looking at the stats, we see a lot of use and viewing during January, so the recordings have clearly been used for revision."

"You can actually plot the exam timetable by the spike of module viewing," added Kate Wright, e-learning development officer for the Information Services Department of Aberystwyth University.

While lecture capture was just introduced in October 2009 at Aberystwyth University, located in Wales, U.K., the popularity of this new technology has exploded, with more than 800 students having been enrolled in modules using lecture capture. Over 100 recordings have already been created, and interest continues to grow as lecturers continue to find innovative new uses that are redefining the dynamic of the lecture.

### Bringing Lecture Capture to Aberystwyth

The interest in recording lectures began several years back when a group of lecturers began recording the audio of their lectures for students to use as a study aid. Students found these recordings to be helpful, yet the recording process was difficult and time consuming for lecturers, as they often required intervention by the Information Services team.

"We had a number of academic staff members that were requesting us to record events and we would record the audio from the event. We'd then have to get the PowerPoint slides and use another product to marry the audio and slides. That was a very time consuming and resource-heavy prospect. It was not scalable at all," said Nigel Thomas, desktop services technical support team leader for Aberystwyth University.

These limitations led the Information Services Department to begin its search for an easy-to-use solution that would enable lecturers to record audio, video and screen capture components as well as PowerPoint slides without intervention from the technical support team.

**“Normally installations like this could take 12 to 18 months, but we did this in six weeks.”**

The team also wanted a solution that would help support the university’s business continuity efforts. According to Davies, “With the swine flu outbreak in 2009, there was a lot of interest from university senior management on how we could use lecture capture technology to provide some continuity of lectures during such an event.”

With these objectives in mind, the Information Services team began their search by evaluating two popular vendor solutions. Yet while reception to the technology was positive, both solutions were hardware-based, making them too expensive to implement on a campus-wide basis.

“At present, all our rooms are set up exactly the same. So no matter where lecturers go, they know what facilities they have when they’re planning a lecture series. It would have been a big change for us to differentiate between rooms had we gone with a hardware solution,” said Wright.

Knowing that limiting the number of rooms with lecture capture capabilities could also lead to scheduling conflicts among lecturers that wanted to record lectures, the Information Services team began looking for a more scalable solution that would allow them to bring lecture capture to all 86 classrooms and lecture halls without purchasing expensive equipment or hardware. They also wanted a solution that would work well with the technologies they already had, such as Active Directory and the course management system Blackboard Learn™ Platform.

After reviewing multiple solutions, the Aberystwyth team came across Panopto, a software-based lecture capture solution that could not only integrate with Active Directory and the Blackboard® platform, but also run off the servers they already had. In particular, the launch pack option lowered the total cost of the solution significantly, and according to senior management, made trying Panopto a “no brainer.”

### **Enhancing Lectures with Panopto**

The Aberystwyth team began implementing Panopto during the summer of 2009, and found the installation process to be very smooth and straightforward. The university purchased the support launch pack, which provided hands-on technical support and helped them complete the installation ahead of the beginning of the fall term. According to Thomas, “Normally installations like this could take 12 to 18 months, but we did this in six weeks.”

Once Panopto was installed in the classrooms, the Information Services team received immediate interest in using the platform. They helped set up 14 lecturers on Panopto for the fall term, and the initial response was very positive. Lecturers found Panopto’s innovative audio and screen capture components to be not only easy for them to use, but also very helpful for students who could now review lectures multiple times to ensure they understood information they might have missed during the lecture.

The seamless integration to the Blackboard platform through a customized Blackboard Learning Block™ also made it easy for students to access lectures from one place. With lectures stored on the Blackboard platform, viewing lectures was very easy and intuitive, eliminating the need for students to contact lecturers when they needed clarification.

“Just recently one member of staff reported far fewer e-mails and interruptions since she has been recording her lectures,” said Thomas.

In addition, some lecturers teaching smaller courses found that with Panopto, they could change the entire structure of their session. For example, instead of using the course periods as a ‘traditional’ lecture slot, they could create and post recordings ahead of time using Panopto. Then, students would view the recordings before class so that they would already be familiar with the course material before the session began.

This process was extremely helpful as it meant that lecture times could now focus more on interactive activities that helped students internalize and evaluate the information being presented, leading to a deeper understanding of the actual material. Thus, with Panopto, lecturers were able to maximize their course times by focusing more on engaging activities.



“Now lecturers are recording the lecture, putting information up on the Blackboard platform and then changing the dynamic of what would have been the lecture slot. So they are using the lecture slot as more of a seminar-based interactive session,” said Thomas.

Positive feedback has led additional modules to experiment with Panopto. For example, one department recently recorded a lecture conducted in the field for students who could not attend the trip. By using Panopto's innovative offline recording feature, the lecturer was able to record the presentation offline and then upload it to the Blackboard platform once there was an Internet connection.

### **Explosion of Panopto**

As of winter 2010, there were more than 18 different modules using Panopto, with popularity growing daily. A student survey conducted in December 2009 found that students view Panopto as a great tool for reviewing course material and studying for exams.

“The Geography Department was one of our early adopters, and in their student satisfaction module forum, the single most common comment was about lecture capture,” said Thomas. “They have had so much good press about lecture capture that they are now looking at it as a department. They are not going to force lecturers to use it, but they are saying that this works, the students like it, and the product is there for you to use.”

According to the Aberystwyth team, the current success has even nudged the lecturers most skeptical of lecture capture to learn more about the solution. For example, after demonstrating Panopto to a lecturer who had previously been unsure about lecture capture, he immediately saw many ways the solution could help him deepen the content of his lectures.

“We had the head of a department in the other day and we were going through Panopto to show him how to provision a course. So we showed him how to do it in about five minutes, and afterwards he said ‘that’s easy peasy.’ So now he is going to record his whole module for us,” said Thomas.

To support this growth, the Aberystwyth team is now planning a number of training sessions that will showcase many of Panopto's innovative features. They also are working to show lecturers how Panopto can be used for a range of new initiatives. Specifically, they hope students soon will be able to use Panopto to record presentations and assessments, and they expect use to spread among a small group of lecturers that specialize in distance learning.

However, the Information Services team also knows that the best way to increase the use of Panopto is to just sit back and let lecturers implement the technology in the way that works best for them. Panopto's ease of use, integration with the Blackboard platform, and ability to use cost-effective recording equipment, continue to help the product sell itself. Thomas notes that there is nothing better than hearing from faculty members that “I’m using this technology and the students love it.”



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or visit [panopto.com](http://panopto.com) for more information.