

CASE STUDY:

University of Edinburgh

Successful IT procurement – capturing and embracing the student voice

Overview

The student voice is so often the driver of positive change in higher education.

So when the University of Edinburgh decided to make lecture recording available at scale to improve the student experience, a student representative was placed at the heart of the procurement process. Students also played a major role in the smooth rollout of the system into lecture halls and teaching rooms.

The first choice lecture recording solution was Echo360, which emphasises quality teaching and learning across the university and its use continues to grow rapidly. All those involved in the project now regard the idea of implementing student-facing technology without student input as almost unthinkable.

Full member of the team

“Our rationale for introducing lecture recording technology was to improve the student experience, so it was vital that we had student involvement from the outset,” says Colin Forrest, Project Manager for the University of Edinburgh’s Information Services Group.

Their volunteer was third-year Psychology undergraduate Karoline Nanfeldt, already a student representative for her School.

“Karoline was with us through each critical stage of identifying the best solution for the University and its students. As an intelligent, thoughtful and articulate individual, having her on board really encouraged everyone to up their game – it was great.”

Anne-Marie Scott, Deputy Director of Learning, Teaching & Web, added: “Karoline had a job to do – she was there to represent students. As a student herself, she had a perspective none of the rest of us could bring. She was a full member of the team and her contribution was invaluable. Whilst one student can’t represent the entire student community, having them as part of a diverse team can avoid defaulting to lazy stereotypes.”

FAST FACTS

- **Strong take-up:**
50% of students logged in within six months, although less than half of lecture rooms had Echo360 installed at the time.
- **Meeting students’ needs:**
Easy to use and allows multiple resources to be captured during a session, including the lecturer speaking as well as the chalkboard they are writing on.
- **High performance:**
A reliable, state-of-the-art lecture capture solution for both staff and students.





Identifying the best solution

One of the key advantages to having Karoline on board was that she had used the University's previous lecture recording system and had firm views of what the new technology needed to deliver from a student's perspective. Importantly, she had also seen first-hand what aspects of the system academics struggled with – recording a lecture previously could be a complicated and time-consuming undertaking.

"What I was really interested in from the start was to find a solution that would work well for both staff and students but could also evolve into something more than a tool for recording lectures," says Karoline. "Echo360 ticked the boxes."

Through the various rounds of dialogue with potential suppliers, the procurement panel discussed and agreed the final specifications they were looking for.

"Karoline was very strong about product features she felt were beneficial to the student experience and which elements would be attractive to students," says Anne Marie. "She challenged our thinking, and this was essential to helping us make the right choice."

Echo360's Q&A feature, notetaking functionality and the system's ease of use stood out for Karoline and she made a very strong case for the innovative nature of the solution to be more highly rated in the university's tender document.

"Karoline's input helped to balance the scoring out to get things that were not just important to staff but to students as well. She was firm if she wanted to score things in a different way and had robust discussions with some very senior colleagues, which really added value to our decision-making process."

Prioritising student experience

Echo360 offered a number of key features in terms of what the panel was looking for, including the flexibility of a software-based solution and ease of playback of recordings.

"In many ways Echo360 was the easiest system to use, and I am a big believer in keeping things simple," says Karoline. "If there's a really steep learning curve, it will always be more difficult to convince people to use it."

"I felt strongly about going with the solution that had a focus on the student experience. Other suppliers tried to sell on technical aspects and not so much about the benefits from a student's perspective, or how the system supports learning."

More than procurement

The purchase of Echo360 wasn't the end of student involvement. Karoline's role also extended to working on the communications strategy for students and staff. She made a series of short publicity videos and also helped train a team of student helpers who were drafted in to provide support in the early weeks.

The panel agree Karoline's involvement has made a big difference, not only to ensuring the right solution was chosen for the university, but also in helping the roll-out to run smoothly.

"For large projects like this, we want to have a student on the team," says Anne-Marie. "Just months into the rollout of our new lecture recording solution, fifty percent of students had already logged on despite the technology being in less than half of available rooms at that point."

"We have already found that making lecture recordings available to students can lessen their anxiety about keeping on top of study and broaden accessibility and inclusivity. The increasing usage of Echo360 is a clear indicator that we made the best choice for the University."

"The approach taken to have student representation in the selection and procurement of Echo360 was endorsed right at the beginning by our Chief Information Officer and reinforces for us the value and impact of our students in supporting significant programmes of work at Edinburgh. In fact, we continue to employ interns on the three-year roll out of the solution and have student helpers in place at the start of term. It's been a great success."