

Using screencasts as an effective feedback assessment tool

Using screencast technology tool to provide students with effective feedback in a detailed and interactive way

The aim

The tutor introduced screencast feedback in his Level 5 Materials & Process Selection module. The tutor works in the Mechanical Materials and Design subject area, in the Department of Engineering and Maths.

The aim was to enhance the student experience by providing detailed and interactive feedback to develop the students' understanding of the subject.

Benefits

- Provides detailed and interactive feedback for students whilst providing time-savings for staff
- Tutor can mark the work anywhere providing there is an internet connection
- Students commented that the screencasts provided a more personal form of feedback that helped them develop their understanding of the subject

The approach

The module leader introduced screencast feedback in order to enhance the student experience by providing personal, detailed and interactive feedback to develop the students' understanding of the subject.

After teaching had taken place in Semester 1, skills were assessed via multiple choice and short answer questions tests. These were created and deployed in Blackboard during seminars. Group feedback highlighting some of the points students had missed, along with model answers, were shared with the cohort once all students had completed the tests in Blackboard. This form of testing culminated in the submission of a file using specified software that students receive on a disk when they start the module. The software is part of a licensed package. The assessment required students to select a material for a particular component based on their learning to date.

The tutor created an assignment submission point in Blackboard and the students submitted their file online for the tutor to access via the Blackboard Grade Centre. The tutor used Screencast-O-Matic in order to give individual feedback on the students' work via audio and visual commentary. Prior to using the software, the tutor had a 15 minute tutorial with the faculty TEL advisor to learn how to use Screencast-O-Matic.

During the recording, the tutor flicked between the model answer and the student's file, while at the same time providing an audio commentary. Before recording the feedback for each student, the tutor looked at the student's work in order to familiarise himself with the file, as doing this live without previewing the submission may result in pauses or stumbling during the recording of the audio. Once the screencast recording was complete, the tutor saved the file in MP4 format to his local drive before uploading the feedback file and mark to the Blackboard Grade Centre. Once all feedback and marks had been uploaded and released, students were able to access the feedback.

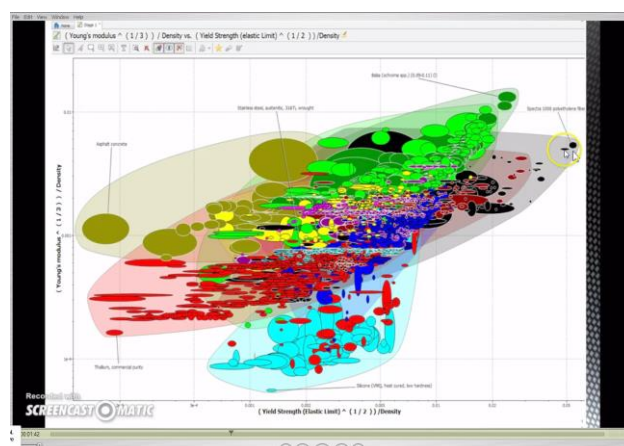


Figure 1: Screencast feedback

“It’s always extremely helpful to get good feedback”

- *Level 5 Student*

The approach (continued)

This form of feedback provided the opportunity for the tutor to give more targeted feedback, being able to unpick each student’s work in a systematic way and identify what they could improve on in the future.

The tutor was able to convey more focused feedback verbally than previously with written feedback. The screencasts produced were no more than five minutes long in order to retain the students’ attention.

Internal and external moderation took place online via the Blackboard Grade Centre with the module leader overseeing the process to alleviate any software issues.

The Outcome

Using technology to facilitate the provision of feedback has achieved the following outcomes:

- Ability to provide more detailed, interactive and corrective feedback verbally than could be provided written
- Much faster form of feedback for the tutor to produce
- Students like to have the facility to stop and replay comments and have a more personal and more meaningful form of feedback
- Students have commented that they tend to get more out of this form of feedback than with the written comments that they are used to – *“Thought it was really good and makes a nice change from the very brief feedback we normally get from other lecturers”*

Profile

Tutor name:
John Metcalf

Faculty:
Arts, Computing,
Engineering and Sciences

Size of cohort:
Large (110+ students)

Technologies used:
Screencast-0-Matic,
online submission via
Blackboard, Blackboard
Grade Centre

If you would like your assessment practice captured and shared in a similar case study, please email ! Assessment Journey Programme

Future Development

The tutor plans to develop his practice further by:

- Requiring students at Level 7 to submit a screencast for their assignment and the module leader returning screencast feedback
- Considering the possibility of using the Helix server in the university to store screencasts in order to keep the assessment in-house for security purposes

Recommendations

The tutor suggests that anyone interested in developing this approach consider the following:

- Spend time with a member of the faculty TEL team to help set up and get accustomed to the software – a few test recordings help before you start recording the students’ feedback
- Storage issues for the screencast files must be considered, as these can be up to 6MB each
- You need a good internet connection and use a headset or earphones if you need to cut out any noise around you
- Find a quiet area where you won’t be distracted and you won’t disturb others around you