National University of Ireland – Galway

KALTURA

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>
> **Dr. Oliver Ryan**
> Senior Technical Officer
> School of Physics

Using Video to Break Down Learning Barriers

The National University of Ireland – Galway (NUI Galway) offers a wide variety of academic disciplines to more than 17,000 students. With each passing semester, the university looks for new ways to incorporate technology in an effort to help students with their careers after graduation.

Four years ago, NUI Galway implemented the Blackboard Learn™ platform campus-wide. Staff members quickly began using Blackboard, increasing the appeal of and demand for technology in the classroom. With this increase in usage came other challenges, the biggest of which was managing video on campus. Staff members wanted to use video in the classroom, but the university didn't have the proper storage capacity.

As an interim solution, the university created its own ad hoc solution for video, but it was clear the staff needed more support. "Our IT services on campus are limited, so it became clear that a hosted solution was needed," said Dr. Sharon Flynn, assistant director at the Centre for Excellence in Learning and Teaching.

NUI Galway first tried external services such as YouTube, Vimeo and iTunes U, but found that staff members were uncomfortable using the technologies since most services could not keep videos private. The university also tried a solution from HEAnet, Ireland's national education and research network, but found the solution to be clunky and difficult to use.

During the search for a new solution, NUI Galway discovered Kaltura. Once the university tried Kaltura, they knew it would suit their needs perfectly. Kaltura, a market-leading open source online video platform, allows faculty to easily create, edit and upload videos with a click of a button. Once the videos are uploaded to the cloud-based platform, students can view the videos from any device in any location. "We liked all the features Kaltura provided, especially the fact that it was a hosted environment, and has a central location to store videos," said Flynn. "The staff have found Kaltura easy to use and like that they can record and upload a video once, but have the ability to use it in multiple places."

The Kaltura Video Building Block was first implemented in a test environment with a small number of staff already using the solution. The Building Block adds a layer of rich media functionality that works across the Blackboard Learn platform, so faculty and students can use media as easily as text. Soon after, in January 2012, Kaltura was installed on the university's main Blackboard instance, making it available campus-wide. "At the end of January, we gave a presentation on Kaltura to the staff and found that many had already started using it – some heavily," said Flynn.

Susan Folan, coordinator for the M.A./Post Graduate Diploma in Conference Interpreting, was one of those users. As the only interpreting school in Ireland, many students go on to interpret for important organizations including NATO, the United Nations and the European Union.

"I was looking for a better way to provide feedback for my students when I stumbled across the Kaltura Video Building Block on Blackboard," said Folan. Before, Folan had students practice in front of a mirror, but many found this awkward and contrived. With video, students could focus on their interpretation and then go back and see their mistakes, such as messing with their hair.

Folan records a video of each student at the beginning of the course and then shoots a second video later on so students can see their progress. All of the videos are uploaded into the system so students can review them online at anytime. "The videos have been great feedback for students and have helped them break their bad habits," said Folan.

Second year physics students have also seen the benefits of using video. Students are required to read a technical manual on each experiment they will conduct before going to the lab, but the descriptions and diagrams confused some students. Dr. Oliver Ryan, senior technical officer for the School of Physics, began recording two-minute videos for each experiment to help alleviate the confusion.

"The videos are a quick introduction to the experiment and help explain what the manual is talking about," said Ryan. "Students can also see the equipment they will be using and the visual saves a lot of time when students come to the lab." Dr. Ryan has recorded a video for all 21 experiments students conduct over the span of a semester, in addition to seven videos that describe how to use the equipment.

"Kaltura is straight forward and very easy to use," said Ryan. "Students can log into their Blackboard account and see a physics button on the left side of the screen that houses the videos. I can also embed multiple videos into the manuals and have the ability to keep the videos private to my class."

With the success of the Kaltura Video Building Block for Blackboard, NUI Galway is currently implementing Kaltura MediaSpace™, a video-centric portal that will allow staff and research groups around campus to promote their work to the rest of the world. The university is also implementing Kaltura's video extension for Microsoft SharePoint™ into its staff-only intranet to house training videos. "Support has been great from Kaltura throughout the process," said Flynn. "We are very pleased with how well it works."

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