

Case Study

Petroc College

Petroc College - increasing equity in education in rural areas



The Challenge

Extensive geographical region between campuses, with limited funding and teaching resource.



The Solution

Creation of virtual classrooms in Mid Devon, allowing remote delivery of education through Vscene.



The Results

Quality remote teaching experience for lecturer and learner, whilst reducing travel time and expense.

The Client

In August 2008, North Devon College and East Devon College merged to become Petroc College.

Award winning Petroc College offers an exceptional range of study programmes, courses and qualifications, including A-levels, apprenticeships, Higher Education, vocational training and part time and adult evening classes.

The college is one of the most rural colleges in the UK with a catchment area covering more than 1,500 square miles. Two campuses are in North Devon, with the third campus 30 miles away in Tiverton, Mid Devon.

To ensure smaller groups of learners in rural Devon have the same access to education, whilst also ensuring teacher time is utilised in an efficient and cost-effective manner, the college were looking for an alternative teaching delivery method.



The Solution

A new method of delivering education to all campuses was required to allow teaching of essential core subjects in North and Mid Devon. With low student cohorts in some campuses, it was unviable to run core classes in Mid Devon due to the financial impact and logistical challenges of staff travelling two hours to teach a one-hour lesson.

The solution was to create virtual classrooms allowing remote delivery of education to students studying at the Mid Devon campus. Quality audio and visual technology was key to ensure the teacher and student felt as though they were in the same physical classroom.

The V-Room system set up in each virtual classroom provides high resolution and frame rate as well as the option to content share. These rooms have also been fitted with two screens, one showing the teacher (who is teaching remotely from North Devon) and one is used to view shared content. The teacher joins and delivers the lesson over browser.

Technology:

Vscene: The class scheduling platform

V-Room: All in one hardware solution



Quality Teaching Experience

Quality audio and visual experience was key to adoption of this technology. The superior audio and visual technology make learners feel the presence of the lecturer, even although they are not in the same physical room.

Pedagogy fits well and learners are more focused and engaged, with more independent working skills.



Increased Learner Engagement

The ability to teach remotely has allowed education to be delivered to smaller cohorts, where it was previously unviable.

Learners quickly adopted the new technology and method of teaching delivery. Collaborative working between learners has encouraged more focused interaction and engagement.



Better Resource Utilisation

The ability to deliver education remotely has provided significant savings on time and expense of staff travel. Previously it would take a lecturer three hours travel time to deliver a one-hour lesson. With teaching resource low and budgets stretched in FE, improving the use of lecturer time has been invaluable to the college.

“Distance doesn’t exist with Vscene and V-Room. 100% pass rate in our Functional Skills English - the results speak for themselves!”

Joanne Byrne, Head of Progressive Studies, Petroc College

Client Q&A

Neil Tanton, Head of IT Services

What were your main priorities when sourcing a solution?

We already had an old video conferencing system that was in need of an upgrade because of age. In order to provide more opportunity for in learners in rural areas, we wanted to find a solution to deliver education if course uptake was low.

The college had the V-Room set up in the boardroom and a couple of meeting rooms. Impressed with the technology, we decided to expand our use of V-Room into the college campus to deliver remote teaching to our Mid Devon campus.

Do you have further plans to extend the use of V-Room and Vscene?

Currently we use the V-Room hardware and Vscene platform to remotely deliver education from our North Devon Campus into learners at our Mid Devon campus. In the future, we would like to use the bring two groups of learners together to collaborate. We would also like to use this as a platform to deliver blended learning with organisations in the private sector.

Joanne Byrne, Head of Progressive Studies

Did lecturer pedagogy have to change with the new technology?

Having simple, easy to use technology was key to quickly grow lecturer confidence in remote delivery. Pedagogically, the importance of a positive and engaging teaching style remained, and this form of education delivery has promoted independent learning skills in our students.

What do you believe are the main tangible benefits so far from using the solution?

The ability to extend the delivery of our education to learners who may have previously not had access to this due to low uptake. Also, better utilisation of lecturer time by reducing travel to Mid Devon and as such reducing the financial impact to the college.

