

Massey University, New Zealand

University improves the learning experience of its distance-learning students using Adobe® Acrobat® Connect™ Professional

Massey University

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Industry

Education

Challenges

- Better engage distance-learning students using more live web-based interactions
- Implement a versatile, cross-campus web conferencing solution that is easy to use for teaching staff and students.

Solution

- Distance Learning
 - Real-time Collaboration
- Massey University is using Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional to improve educational experiences for students in distance-learning classes.

Results

- Improved distance-learning experience with dynamic, easy-to-use conferencing tools
- Enhanced collaboration among staff and with external agencies
- Accelerated creating and delivering online courses
- Provided foundation for interactive, real-time collaboration among students

Systems At A Glance

- Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional

Massey University is one of New Zealand's leading educational institutions with a strong reputation for the quality of its teaching and research. It has campuses in the North Island, in Palmerston North, Wellington, and Auckland.

In addition to traditional teaching, the university specialises in distance-learning programmes. Through these programmes, the university provides courses to students throughout New Zealand both in urban and remote locations, as well as students studying overseas. Teaching staff at the university continually seek better teaching practices to enhance the experiences of distance-learning students, which account for about 50% of the students enrolled in the University.

In 2004, Massey University's Philip Roy received national recognition when he was appointed a Flexible Learning Leader in New Zealand, his research focusing on video streaming and web-based conferencing technologies. He explored a variety of systems in America and Australia, and the way in which the tertiary sector could incorporate these into teaching. The results of his findings led the university to trial and implement what is now Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional software.

"Acrobat Connect Professional provides a quantum leap for the university in how it is able to deliver courses and engage with students. It allows for live interaction between teaching staff and students at a fraction of the cost and in a way that most video conferencing solutions simply don't allow," says Philip Roy, eLearning Facilitator for the College of Humanities and Social Sciences. "Lectures can be broadcast online, interactive tutorials and meetings held online, and a wealth of enhanced, interactive, and media-rich information published and made available to students. Students can also collaborate amongst themselves, which is invaluable in the learning process."

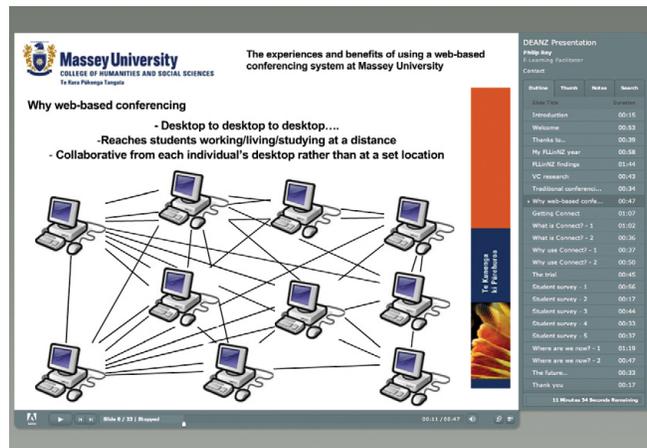
Prior to introducing Acrobat Connect Professional, live communication with students was limited to basic text chat functionality within the University's Learning Management System. Acrobat Connect Professional opened new doors in interactive communication.

"With a unique and geographically dispersed student body, we needed a system with tremendous functionality and future potential, but at the same time one that was not technically challenging or demanding on students. The Adobe solution has allowed lecturers to quickly create and reuse existing material and publish them online using familiar tools such as Microsoft PowerPoint. It has also become a cost-effective tool for collaboration among staff," says Roy.

Acrobat Connect Professional is easy for students to access without the need for special software or plug-ins or extensive software knowledge. It uses Adobe Flash® Player which is already installed on nearly 98% of Internet-connected desktops worldwide.

Roy reports that a significant benefit of Acrobat Connect Professional is that it can be delivered through a unified application or browser window that can be arranged, manipulated, rearranged, customised, and have new functionality added on-the-fly. The extensible nature of the system means that completely new functionality can be added quickly at little or no cost.

Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional enables Massey University to deliver courses and engage collaboratively with students. Lectures, interactive tutorials, and meetings can be conducted online, and a wealth of enhanced, interactive, and media-rich information can be published and made available to students.



“Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional has revolutionised my interaction and engagement with distance-learning students and allowed me to more fully support them. Wherever my students are and whatever their web access is—whether it is dial-up, broadband, or wireless—we can all meet and communicate in real time.”

Craig Prichard,
Senior Lecturer,
Department of Management,
Massey University

Craig Prichard, a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management at Massey University confirms that the introduction of Acrobat Connect Professional has dramatically enriched the experience of his distance-learning students. “Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional has revolutionised my interaction and engagement with distance-learning students and allowed me to more fully support them. Wherever my students are and whatever their web access is—whether it is dial-up, broadband, or wireless—we can all meet and communicate in real time,” says Prichard.

Prichard uses Acrobat Connect Professional to turn Microsoft PowerPoint presentations into streamed-audio enhanced presentations with voiceover narration. This allows him to broadcast lectures online, as well as hold weekly tutorials and web meetings.

In the live sessions, Prichard can run through study guides and case studies and students can take part and respond using a web environment that emulates the interaction of conventional teaching methods. The interactive element promotes valuable, collaborative learning between students. These live sessions can then be recorded so that students have the opportunity to review content after the session is over, a particularly useful resource for reviewing before exams. Students attending classes on campus also benefit from being able to access this material from home.

Prichard frequently includes interactive surveys, quizzes, anonymous polls, Q&A’s, and multiple-choice questions in his live sessions. The student responses allows Prichard to have instant feedback on the level of understanding that his students have on subjects, so that he can easily expand or clarify concepts that students have not fully comprehended.

Surveys conducted by the University with its students have shown exceptionally positive results with 90% of those surveyed agreeing that Acrobat Connect Professional enhanced the quality of the course.

“I find it is like integrating them into a classroom environment in a place and time that suits them. This alleviates the isolation and anxiety experienced by many students. It also intensifies the relationship between tutor and student in the same way that traditional lectures and tutorials do. This benefits the learning outcomes,” explains Prichard.

Future opportunities for using Adobe Acrobat Connect Professional that are currently being explored include:

- Utilising Acrobat Connect Professional for online, full-day conferences
- Including more guest speakers in the curriculum who can present remotely to students using Acrobat Connect Professional
- Reducing time and travel costs for staff teaching at more than one campus by using the Adobe solution for remote web delivery and interaction
- Facilitating cross-campus and professional development meetings between staff
- Screen sharing and remote computer control for technical support and staff and student training

For More Information

www.adobe.com/products/acrobatconnectpro/



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