

Taking the classroom anywhere: The benefits of document cameras

Maurice Sheridan



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It is common knowledge that learning doesn't just happen in the classroom, nor are students ready to learn on demand. Utilizing the technology of document cameras in the SAB, I designed and developed successful activities using video recordings of the exercise demonstrations that I used in class. These video recordings were used for students to access outside class time to support their learning.

Previously, teaching in a classroom, where video recording wasn't available, I had a retest rate of 70% for one particular course. This rate dropped to 15% when I implemented the use of video demonstrations. Teaching in the SAB one year on, I have had continued success with this practice where the pass rate on exams for another course rose from 56% to 87% in one semester.

The SAB whiteboards are designed and placed for collaborative use by student groups rather than for teaching demonstrations. Document cameras project onto screens for maximum visual access. So I decided the cameras, the projector and a book of exercises would be my new whiteboard. An added bonus was that the cameras have a record function, so I can record, then post the lecture and example demonstrations to Blackboard which students can view outside class time thus expanding the learning space from just the classroom to anywhere.

Critical to the success of the activity is developing the exercise question and the worked answer to be viewed in the video. Textbook examples are formatted onto a single page so that they can be viewed on the document camera screen. Once the demonstration is completed the flexibility of movement in the Project Space is beneficial as I can walk around easily and check on individual and group progress, and give assistance to those who need it most.

In order to assess the effectiveness of the activity, I compared student results from two semesters. In the first semester no video recording was used and in the second, document cameras and recordings were utilised. Results indicated that the presence of cameras with the ability to record helped to improve student performance.

Having gained experience with the cameras, the technology and their operation, I am more prepared with my artefacts before coming to class. I feel more at ease now that I am aware of what the technology in the learning spaces can support. Next year I will dispense with the experimental nature of the presentations.

I feel encouraged that the students found the exercise to be beneficial. In a traditional classroom I had a smaller window of opportunity to support the students' learning. Now students say that the use of the videos is great because they can review course content at any time. Students have encouraged me to keep using these technologies as it has made their learning easier. That's what I intend to do!

