

Borders College

Delivering a true multi-media learning experience



“The Sports Department, for example, is using SMART Board™ interactive whiteboards and SMART Audio to demonstrate rugby tactics in an interesting and interactive way. We’re beginning to show that there really are no limits to what you can do with it to deliver a truly multi-media learning experience for your students – whatever their age and whatever they’re studying!”

David Killean, Assistant Principal,
Borders College

These are exciting times for Borders College. With the ground-breaking new Scottish Borders Campus at Netherdale in Galashiels it has created a centre of educational excellence in the region that acts as a central hub for its other sites at Newtown St Boswells, Hawick, Duns, Jedburgh and Peebles, ensuring that all students benefit from first-class learning and teaching resources. The multi-million pound development features new practical training areas, a new library and learning resource centre and new student social areas – supported by state-of-the-art ICT

facilities to deliver a true multi-media learning experience.

“As the region’s sole further education provider, our primary role is to serve the local population and we offer hundreds of full-time, part-time and evening courses covering a huge range of subjects,” says Assistant Principal David Killean. “We enrol around 8,000 students a year, but whether they’re school leavers, people returning to education or individuals striving to improve their skills in the workplace, they deserve the very best learning experience and that was top of our agenda when deciding on the interactive learning technology for the new facilities.”

Although the College had been using interactive whiteboards for several years, the development of the new campus was the ideal opportunity to ensure that the College was equipped with the best available interactive learning technology going forward. “Many of us assumed that we would go down a certain route, but rather than relying on any preconceptions we put out a tender and asked vendors to make recommendations on what they thought was the best system for us,” explains David Killean. “We eventually arrived at a shortlist of two and asked Steljes (the authorised representative of SMART Technologies in the UK) and another vendor to present to us and demonstrate their systems. A number of lecturers – our end users – were invited to the presentation, and every one scored SMART higher.”

“The consensus was that the technology in SMART was far more intuitive,” he continues. “Using a

finger to control the touch screen system felt intuitive for staff and the SMART Notebook™ software has echoes of familiar desktop office applications, making adoption of this new software straightforward. As a result, we’ve decided to standardise on SMART in the medium term and over time, all other sites will eventually be upgraded to SMART Board interactive whiteboards.”

Creating a true multi-media experience

Selecting the best available interactive technology was just the beginning of the journey; the next step was to ensure that it was utilised to its full potential. “We didn’t want our SMART Board interactive whiteboards to be just a flat tool for dealing with text, but to have a ‘wow’ factor to capture and keep attention,” explains David. “We view the SMART Board interactive whiteboard as a true multi-media system that’s capable of delivering a really engaging and rewarding learning experience for our students.”

As David and his colleagues rightly recognised, an essential – and often overlooked – element in delivering effective multi-media usage is the quality of the sound. “Because of this vital multi-media function, we wanted a suitable audio system in every room to enhance the educational experience, and engage and excite the students,” he explains. “As our room sizes vary, the systems were tailored to the needs of each particular space and we selected SMART Audio to work with several of our SMART Board interactive whiteboards.”



SMART Audio is a powerful and practical classroom amplification system that distributes sound evenly throughout the room, so every student can hear clearly above the background noise, no matter where they're sitting. "It can difficult to project your voice in a large room, so it was important to offer voice enhancement to grab and keep students' attention – and protect lecturers' voices!" says David. "SMART Audio is also connected to our hearing loop system, so it helps our hearing-impaired learners as well."

Using the wireless microphone, lecturers can move around the room as they speak and encourage students to engage in classroom discussions by giving them the wireless, handheld microphone. "You can easily connect SMART Audio to a CD, DVD or MP3 player, and I've been really pleased with all the systems," says David. "They've worked well and helped to create an exciting multi-media experience for our students."

Growing up with SMART

The College's determination to deliver a true multi-media learning experience for its students is given further impetus by the existing

familiarity with the technology. "The penetration of SMART Board interactive whiteboards is quite high in schools in this region, so many of our students have grown up with this technology," explains David. "That means it's already a familiar tool for both lecturers and students, and they can work together more effectively."

As a result, lecturers are constantly challenged to come up with new and imaginative ways of using the technology to enhance the multi-media experience. Ongoing Continuing Professional Development for staff is therefore essential, and Steljes has helped Borders College to implement a 'train the trainer' approach that creates in-house experts who can pass on their knowledge to their colleagues. "We will continue to develop lecturers' skills in all areas, but particularly in the development of learning materials for SMART Board interactive whiteboard and the SMART Response voting system that we've recently acquired," says David. "We recognise that SMART Notebook software has huge potential, and although it's still early days in terms of working with staff to develop and share materials and

resources using this software, people are already coming up with some highly innovative ways of using the technology. The Sports Department, for example, is using SMART Board interactive whiteboards and SMART Audio to demonstrate rugby tactics in an interesting and interactive way. We're beginning to show that there really are no limits to what you can do with it to deliver a truly multimedia learning experience for your students – whatever their age and whatever they're studying!"

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David Killean, Assistant Principal, Borders College Communication and liaison officer

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