

Cardiff University puts its faith into Questionmark™ Perception™ for Assessment

A long tradition to give students valuable guidance on course direction

“...a compelling choice for all educational organisations.”

The Welsh School of Pharmacy at Cardiff University has a long-standing association with Questionmark that dates back to 1992. Initially, this was due to a widespread drive towards the replacement of laboratory-based practicals by simulations, assessments using Questionmark. Since that time the use of Questionmark software, especially Perception, has developed and multiplied to cover a multitude of formative and summative assessments using rich media types across many university departments and subject disciplines. In fact, today Questionmark Perception is an important part of the university's assessment process, giving students and staff valuable guidance on where to concentrate further activity and resources.

In 1992 the Welsh School of Pharmacy began to replace many of its manual systems with computerised assessments based on Questionmark's standalone assessment software. Although this provided limited features and functionality, it was at the time a significant step into the automation of many tests that were paper based up to this point.

This Windows-based product was used by the organisation for some 10 years mainly within the pharmacology and pharmacy law modules where many of the assessments were open book and time restricted to simulate normal working conditions. This would involve students facing a large number of questions in a short period of time with their reference books available to support them at all times. These tests were used to inform students of specific areas of their studies that required additional focus and support moving forwards and provided a useful resource to the teaching staff. The staff involved used the question scores for the participant group to inform large-scale feedback sessions involving all the students.

At this point, the School of Pharmacy was administering around 2,000 assessments annually, which constituted a huge growth year on year. They were freeing up staff time to concentrate on other activities and providing very interesting feedback to staff on students' progress. However, their popularity was such that in 2002 the system required an update and Questionmark Perception version 2.0 was purchased to deliver a more robust and feature rich service to students and staff alike.

The Pharmacy team continued to develop use of Questionmark Perception, making it available to other departments and obtained a grant of nearly £30k to support the system university wide. This new investment meant that more departments could benefit from the assessment system and the number of assessments delivered quickly rose by a massive 50 per cent.

A particularly keen user of Perception was the Maths department where remedial maths is both core and service taught, and Perception was used in a diagnostic and tutorial manner. The Pre-clinical / Biological Sciences department was delivering hybrid summative and formative assessments to its 350 students, giving them as many attempts as they required. The Post Graduate School Pharmacy Department was using the system to support CPD by distance learning, providing formative assessments supported by paper-based distance learning packs.

The new investment also enabled a number of online assessment “champions” to be trained in using the system in order that they could pass on their newly found skills to others. This led to the development of new question templates and wizards to import questions, thus helping those that were not as conversant in Perception as others to use the system with ease.

By the end of 2004 many more departments were actively using the Questionmark system, and the development group represented more than 50 per cent of the student body. At this point the systems were once more updated to a newer, more powerful version of Perception. This would enable greater use of rich media question types in subjects, such as nursing, where a more visual or interactive engagement is required to assess the students. The feedback on student performance is also greatly enhanced in order to provide useful impact to each student and their tutors on the best next steps and focus for the future.

More information

Questionmark Contact:

Email: info@questionmark.co.uk

Phone: +44 (0)20 7263 7575

Web: <http://www.questionmark.com>

