



Questionmark Case Study

Distance learners at Thomas Edison State College stay on track with Perception quizzes

Background

Thomas Edison State College enrolls over 10,000 adult learners representing every state and nearly 80 countries. Being able to take classes that often depend entirely on independent study -- on their own schedules -- represents an ideal arrangement for these students, who are seeking bachelor's and master's degrees as they raise families and pursue their careers.

Textbook-Based Courses

The College has developed e-Pack™ independent study courses that require students to master information in a textbook. After each chapter or unit, the enrollees take an electronic quiz using Questionmark™ Perception™. The quizzes are only for practice and to reinforce what they've learned; they don't count towards their grade. As a result, the students can take them over and over viewing a different set of questions covering the same topics (utilizing the random presentation feature within Perception). When learners answer a question incorrectly they automatically receive feedback on that question. The feedback, provided within Perception, points the student to areas in their textbook for review.

Importing Questions

Because Perception makes it possible to randomize the questions in the quizzes, each e-Pack™ course might actually have 400 to 500 quiz questions. Faculty members provide the questions in all forms – word processing files, publisher test banks, test files, and even handwritten, making the task of creating quizzes difficult. One multiple choice question might actually require entering feedback five times for the four different choice options and one no-answer.

The College's IT department created a program that can import questions from a number of different sources and store them in a database. The program then links individual questions to topics that have also been entered, automatically generating a boiler plate feedback statement that says, "You missed this question. Review [such and such] a topic in a [particular] chapter or unit."

Military Students

One of Thomas Edison State College's major clients is the United States military. Soldiers in far-flung places such as Iraq and Afghanistan routinely take the College's distance learning courses so they can continue their education. One group, however, is unable to access courses online. Serving on submarines in the Navy precludes that option.

Using Perception's QTI XML export option, the department exports interactive courses to software called Lectora, developed by Trivantis. The program enables the school to put e-Pack™ courses on CDs specifically for use on submarines. These CD courses give the Navy students the full feedback that conventional online classes provide for other distance learning students.

Other Assessments

The nursing program at the College uses Perception for course evaluations. The College has now initiated a program with the U.S. Army that enables students to take exams within their courses. In addition, the College administers TECEP® tests that allow students to earn college credit by demonstrating college-level knowledge they have gained through work, personal interests, or independent study. Since the stakes are so high, these exams have only been given on paper in proctored testing rooms. Recently, the College has created a pilot program to give these exams, still in a proctored environment, using Perception instead of paper.

More information

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