

Digital student exemplars

Enhancing the digital experience of students

This case study is relevant to the digital student challenge:

Engage in dialogue with students about their digital experience and empower them to develop their digital environment

Transforming the student voice process

Pembrokeshire College uses a digital tool and methodology called **VocalEyes digital democracy** to improve learner involvement and satisfaction. VocalEyes supports democratic decision-making for any given community in a way that is transparent and engaging.

VocalEyes uses a crowd-sourcing approach that enables students to suggest ideas through the online system which are then debated and rated by their peers online, before being analysed and presented to the senior management team at the college through learner voice representatives. Feasible ideas are then put into action and the college community is kept informed of actions taken and sometimes, the reasons why ideas are not taken forward. The process flowchart below shows how the system works:



All students are trained to use VocalEyes and are able to engage via a widget on the college intranet, any laptop in the college or their personal smartphones. VocalEyes is also used in the classroom for group tutorials. It has successfully replaced minute-taking in some circumstances. The system is integrated with the college Intranet and triggers messages to let students know when new ideas are available for rating. Learner voice representatives present the data gathered and the ideas and ratings at the learner voice group meetings which are chaired by the principal or a senior manager. This demonstrates commitment and support for the initiative at the highest level – something seen as crucial to the success of use of VocalEyes at Pembrokeshire College.

"The VocalEyes system is really empowering students – their ideas are being put into action. It shows their opinions and views actually count."

Gareth Bromhall : chairman of learner voice committee

Being able to participate online in this way makes the process transparent and democratic as everyone and every idea is treated equally. It also supports those who are less likely to voice an opinion or those who are perhaps otherwise less well represented, the 'hard to reach' and currently disengaged. For example, female engineering trainees requested boiler suits that were designed for women rather than men – a problem that it was easy to address once it was identified.

With over 50,000 transactions since the system was introduced 2013 the VocalEyes methodology has been cited as an example of best practice by ESTYN, the office of Her Majesty's Inspectorate for Education and Training in Wales, and was shortlisted for a Times Educational Supplement (TES) award. It has been so successful that it is now also being used with staff as well as to underpin institutional planning processes leading to the identification of savings of approximately £28,000. Pembrokeshire College's learner voice Ipsos MORI survey results reflect an improvement in both student satisfaction and communication with improved results in students being asked to give views and having feedback on these views.

How does this meet the challenge?

- » VocalEyes empowers students, encouraging them to participate in decisions related to their learning experience through a network rooted in community
- » Vocalise teaches users the basics of online, courteous, democratic debate, encouraging active citizenship
- » The transparency of the system has enhanced decision-making and the ability to communicate that is built into the system helps to close the feedback loop

Find out more:

Pembrokeshire College – [Learning for Life - VocalEyes](#)

Further information on [VocalEyes](#) and the [VocalEyes blog](#)

Contact:

Sarah Hoss, community engagement specialist (VocalEyes): s.hoss@pembrokeshire.ac.uk and Dr Geoff Elliott, director of business, development and community: g.elliott@pembrokeshire.ac.uk