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How to: Get Started with Screencasting [HPEC Fast Facts]

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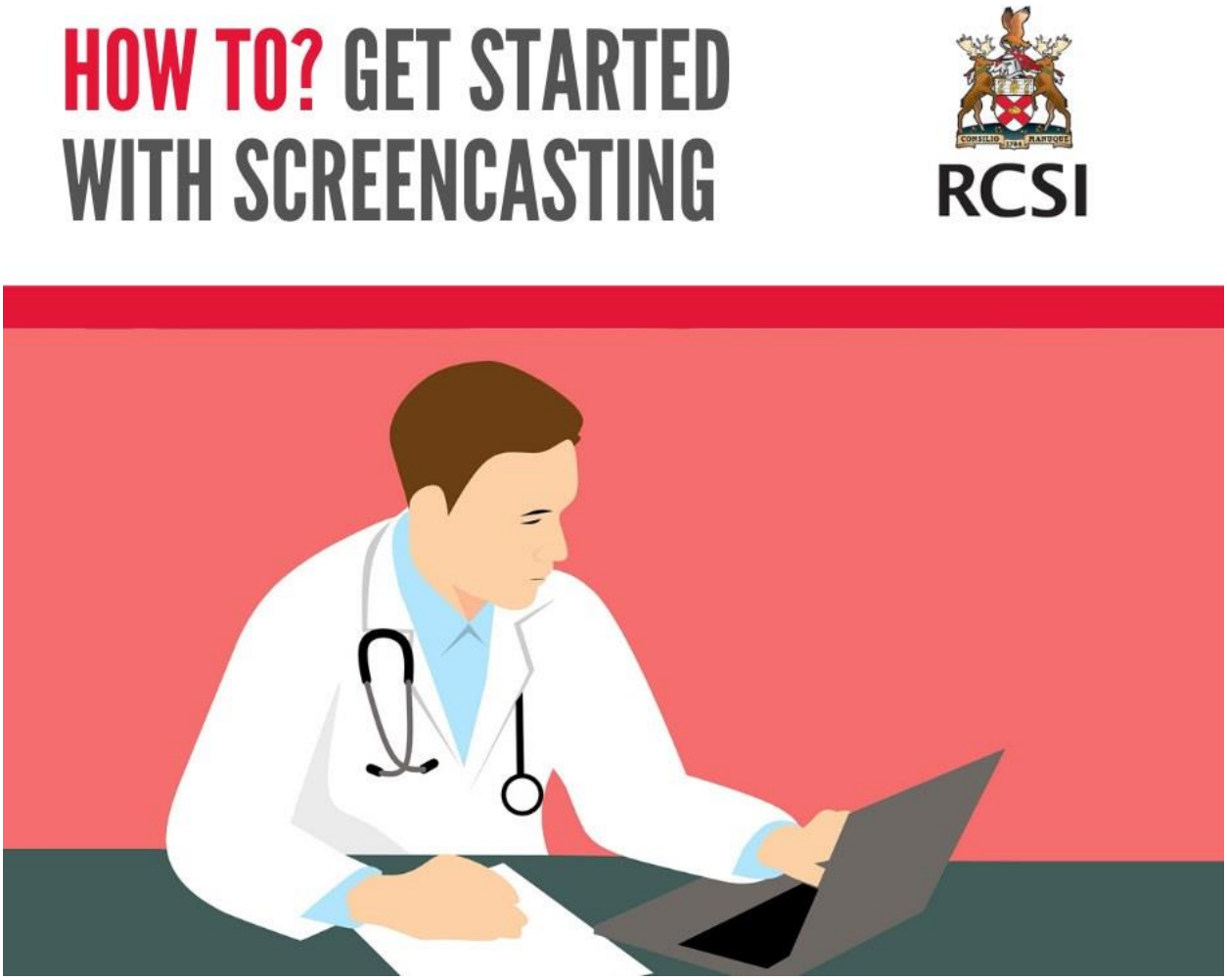
HPEC Fast Facts

How to: get started with screencasting



You might think that screencasting is one for the techsperts, but if you've ever narrated a set of slides, you have created a screencast. The term simply refers to recording your activities at your own computer. Narrated slides are a good start, but screencasts have many more applications, and can be used to decrease the social distance between educator and learner. Used effectively, screencasting can create "a 'look over my shoulder' effect similar to one-on-one instruction" (Educause, 2006).

One of the strengths of screencasting is its capacity to infuse text-based, academic material with the presence of a real-life educator. These extra layers of verbal and non-verbal information can help to engage learners. For example, in studies that explore academic feedback, audio-visual feedback is perceived as more "real" and "personal" in student cohorts (Mathieson, 2012). To the learner, screencasted feedback feels more like a face-to-face meeting than receiving text-based feedback alone (Anson et al., 2016; Grigoryan, 2017).

Providing richer feedback to learners is just one way to use screencasting inventively. Other applications of the technology include:

- Giving step-by-step or complex instructions e.g., navigating a complicated website
- Creating practical demonstrations e.g., carrying out a literature search, working through an equation
- Creating "trigger "material e.g., recording a communication scenario for students to discuss
- Walking through software that learners may not be able to access e.g., explaining how to use electronic health records

A final consideration is that you can turn the process around, asking students to create their own screencasts. For example, they can demonstrate their work through a screencast; where did they find the information? how did they reach their solution? A learner-created screencast, shared with the consent of the student, can be a valuable peer learning resource.

So, how can we build skills around screencasting? Here are our four tips for educators:

Plan in advance

Good preparation is key. Consider what you want to achieve in the screencast, and sketch out what you are going to do and say. Some educators like to use a word-by-word script, whilst others prefer to talk more naturally around a list of bullet points. Remember to chunk your content into discrete sections; learners tend to find short and to-the-point videos (<5-10 mins) easier to navigate than lengthier efforts. Also, consider how you might encourage students to engage with the material as you go by incorporating reflective questions, and/or links to quizzes, or additional resources.

Getting set up with the technology

Although a wide range of free and paid-for screencasting applications are available, the most practical option for RCSI staff is Panopto. To use this software for the first time, you'll need to download it onto your laptop. Once you're ready to go, a simple guide to creating your first screencast can be found here. Have a go with the software, and carry out a few "dummy runs" with the technology, this can help you identify any issues with your microphone or home/office set-up.

Recording a screencast

Sound quality is vital for screencasts. Record in a quiet room and use a good quality external microphone. Don't worry if you have occasional blips in what you say or do; this "DIY" tone can feed into the social presence that students value. When you are recording, make use of the pause button. This is useful when you want to take a quick break, or if background noise does start to interfere. A detailed guide to creating a higher education screencast can be found here (Raftery, 2010, pp213-226).

After recording

On many occasions, you can record a short screencast without needing to edit. If you do need to clip a portion out, usually at the beginning or end, Panopto also has this functionality. Once the video is ready to view there are still some final steps to consider. Who do you want to be able to access the video? Do you want viewing rights restricted to your students alone, or more widely available? Click on the "share" button beside the video to edit the "Who has access" section. For 1-2-1 feedback, click on "specific people" and add the student's email address in the "invite people" textbox. This will automatically send

the video link to this student. For more general material, you can create a shareable link which can be emailed to learners, or – better still – added to Moodle for easy access.

Learn more

To discover more about screencasting, and how it can be used support digital engagement, here are additional resources that you might find useful:

- A qualitative synthesis of video feedback in higher education (Mahoney et al., 2018)
- Create Netflix-style learning with screencasts
- Missing the Chalkboard: Using Screencasting in the Online Classroom
- Screencasting to Engage Learning

For more information about RCSI's HPEC (Health Professions Education Centre) and its activities, please visit our website.

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