

Rapid implementation of digital resources supports high-quality teaching for remote learners

Kaplan International Pathways provides pre-university and International Year One education for international students through partnerships with universities in the UK. It was essential that they maintained continuity of learning and high-quality student experiences despite the challenges of the pandemic.

VitalSource enabled them to rapidly integrate several hundred eTextbooks, ensuring flexibility and consistency for students and lecturers, and opening up new pedagogical opportunities.

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Craig Fletcher, Head of Innovative Learning Solutions at Kaplan International Pathways

SELECTING THE IDEAL PARTNER

Kaplan International Pathways needed to be confident they could continue to meet the high expectations of their students and university partners, regardless of campus closures and travel restrictions. A key challenge was providing access to core learning resources for all students.

Working with VitalSource was a relatively easy decision for the team at Kaplan International Pathways. They were able to draw on the experiences of Kaplan Open Learning, part of the Kaplan Group, who have used VitalSource to provide access to content and improve student engagement for almost a decade. This positive recommendation provided reassurance at a time when rapid decisions needed to be made.

With more than 6,000 students across 10 colleges and 15 university partners, the solution needed to be straightforward to implement and easy for staff and students to use. Content was embedded directly into the VLE. This reduced the complexity of managing multiple courses and multiple university partners, while giving students direct access to the exact content they needed for their course.

'The LTI integration meant we were able to provide very easy, seamless access. We could give each student access to the books they needed without the distribution becoming an overwhelming task.'

Craig Fletcher, Head of Innovative Learning Solutions at Kaplan International Pathways

Sourcing the correct content was straightforward. In most cases, students accessed a digital version of their existing textbook via VitalSource Bookshelf®. In the few cases where titles were not available, lecturers selected alternatives from the VitalSource catalogue of 1.5 million titles from 1,100+ publishers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching staff are critical to the success of any eTextbook implementation. It was essential that the lecturers at Kaplan International Pathways were supported through the transition to digital content, particularly given the wider context of change and uncertainty. Many were new to using digital textbooks for teaching purposes.

VitalSource provided bespoke training and workshops to build confidence. These familiarised staff with the functionality built into the learning platform, then demonstrated how the content and platform could be incorporated into their teaching to support learning objectives in a way that was not possible with print books. This allowed staff to integrate the digital content from the textbooks into the curriculum and to show students how the textbook content could be used for assignments.

'What we realised is this was about more than just giving students access. What it really ended up being was a learning tool that we could use to enhance our lessons, to enhance our materials.'

Megan Reeves Academic Leader, Business, Law and Social Sciences, Kaplan International Pathways

Megan incorporated activities from the textbook into lessons, setting assignments that directly linked the content to the classes. This showed students the value of the content and helped them to understand how the online textbooks could be used to build their knowledge. Linking their in-class experiences with self-study of the eTextbook encouraged students to engage with the platform, and helped familiarise them with using the VitalSource platform.

The functionality of the eTextbooks can be particularly useful in supporting international students. Lecturers can direct students to the relevant sections of the text so they are not overwhelmed by content in a foreign language. Videos allow students to re-watch content. Students with English as a second language can easily cut and paste words into textbook search tools to find pertinent information, or use the read aloud feature to become comfortable with pronunciation of unfamiliar words.

Megan sees the benefits of digital textbooks as applicable beyond online learning and adding value to hybrid teaching and learning environments. They allow students to collaborate and work together through the text, and for teachers to shape the learning experience. She says 'if something's really, really important that perhaps I want the students to focus on, I can actually highlight it, add a flashcard or note about a particular topic, that the students can look back at later to help them with their studies... these features really helped to make the books online useful, and I think they've got some functionality that we're just not going to get from physical textbooks.'

STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

The introduction of digital textbooks was a change for the students. Due to the pandemic, the initial group of students experienced a sudden, mid-term transition to eTextbooks and some were nervous. Digital textbooks were a new and different way of learning.

'Instead of having to remember and write down everything, you could just make a marking on exactly where you need, like where you need that information later and then being able to come back, be able to stop and start.'

Kayode Makinde, Aerospace and Engineering student, Kaplan International Pathways

Training on tools like searching and annotating the text helped transform their learning experience and demonstrate their value. As the books are available on multiple devices, students can study in a more flexible way, work across mobile phones, tablets and laptops, with their notes and progress synchronised across their devices.

ANALYTICS AND INSIGHTS

Built-in analytics allow staff to monitor student engagement. Academic and College Managers can access statistics on overall usage levels while teaching staff can monitor individual student profiles to understand how long students spend reading and engaging. This helps pick up issues earlier and intervene to support the students.

Engagement analytics provide additional data that can be used alongside attendance and attainment to understand the students and to tailor the course better. At Kaplan International Pathways they were able to see that student engagement levels increased as teacher used the books in class and set tasks linked to the books.

'If we use the textbooks in a transformational way, really incorporating them into learning and giving a sense of purpose, we can not just maintain but improve student engagement with their learning. It's about creating the behaviour we want to see.'

Craig Fletcher, Head of Innovative Learning Solutions at Kaplan International Pathways

MOVING FORWARD

What began as a pragmatic step to allow Kaplan International Pathways to provide continuity of learning and reduce anxiety, has delivered unexpected benefits and opened new pedagogical approaches.

'For us, these changes have been a springboard to other opportunities. We are looking at how we can be more agile, providing customised access and customised experience. This step has opened new opportunities in ways we did not expect.'

Craig Fletcher, Head of Innovative Learning Solutions at Kaplan International Pathways

Kaplan International Pathways are looking forward to returning to face-to-face teaching, however they will continue to incorporate the benefits of digital learning into their curriculum.



About Kaplan International Pathways

Kaplan International Pathways, a division of Kaplan, Inc., offers international students a wide range of flexible study options, from University preparation programmes in the UK, Australia, USA, and Japan through to full degree programmes in partnership with universities at locations in Singapore, Hong Kong and Australia. Through our academic partnerships with leading universities, each year we are proud to welcome thousands of students from more than 100 countries through the doors of our colleges.



About VitalSource

Founded in 1994, VitalSource is the leading education technology solutions provider committed to helping partners create, deliver, and distribute affordable, accessible, and impactful learning experiences worldwide. As a recognised innovator in the digital course materials market, VitalSource is best known for partnering with thousands of publishers and institutions to deliver extraordinary learning experiences to millions of active users globally.