



INVESTING FOR THE FUTURE WITH THE VARICAM LT

UK FIRST FOR THE VARICAM AS BOURNEMOUTH
UNIVERSITY INVESTS TO TEACH THE NEXT GENERATION
OF CINEMATOGRAPHERS AND ANIMATORS



Bournemouth University runs a range of courses from its prestigious Faculty of Media & Communication. Home to the National Centre for Computer Animation, it is recognised as the best place in the UK to study computer animation and visual effects, having won an Queen's Anniversary Prize in 2011 for 'World Class' teaching.

With a particular focus on placement and having students gain industry experience as part of their degree, the University is set to make a major investment in the Poole Gateway Building, which will provide specialist facilities for the Faculty of Media & Communication as well as the Faculty of Science & Technology when it opens in 2019. The building will incorporate facilities including TV studio space, sound stage, motion capture and green screens.

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For the past two years the University has operated an off-campus facility, home to an impressive large green screen studio, and will eventually move to the state-of-the-art Poole Gateway Building once it is completed.

Four courses make use of the university's large green screen studio, BA Computer Visualisation and Animation, BA Computer Animation Arts and the postgraduate courses MA Digital Effects and MA Cinematography.

The University's investment in resources and studio spaces has increased significantly in recent years, to the point where staff could begin to consider more feature-rich cameras.

The University has become the first in the UK to invest in the VariCam LT, having purchased three units through distributor Holdan.

"We were looking at camera bodies priced at around the £7-8000 range," explains Steve Hubbard, who is Senior Lecturer in Effects.

Bournemouth University has a historic legacy with Panasonic, having first acquired an SDX-900 and extending its life by adding an SDI card and external recorder. Later the department moved to the Panasonic AF101, which was the first time the University had used a single chip camera with prime lenses and was a big step forward.

"We conducted some preliminary testing before the VariCam had been launched in the UK, and were considering comparable cameras. It was when we went to BVE where we saw it exhibited for the first time," said Rehan Zia, who lectures in Computer Animation.

"When we got hands-on with the cameras we found the robustness of similar cameras to be disappointing. The last batch of cameras we had lasted us five years so they needed to be robust.

"4K was also something we felt was important because we were looking to futureproof. Finally high frame rate capability was a must have. In the past students have had to hire cameras out to use on their work as they needed that functionality our own camera stock didn't have."

The department started using the VariCams in workshop sessions, using all three cameras at first. Students work in a wide array of setups, including track, jib, dolly as well as a period of time working with the cameras handheld.

"They've picked it up quite quickly, this was a concern because we only received the cameras two weeks before the students started using them," said Steve Hubbard, Senior Lecturer in Effects.

"4K was also something we felt was important because we were looking to futureproof"

"The more hands on time they get with someone supervising them the less breakages we get. We've had experience with Panasonic cameras in years past and they're pretty student proof."

The higher number of contact hours on the University's MA courses means postgraduate groups will have the opportunity to gain experience working on location getting to grips with the VariCam.

"The students have been given multiple projects this year and have been filming in the green screen studio and on various locations," explains Neil Goridge, who lectures on Bournemouth's MA Digital Effects course.

"The feedback I have received so far is that they have really enjoyed using the VariCam and actually found it quite straightforward to use, which is obviously very pleasing to hear. The footage I have seen is very good and potentially gives them lots of options in post production, which is key to Animation and Digital Effects courses"