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## **Handsets give students a real buzz from lectures**

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Fingers on buzzers. Which Scottish university is expected to become the first in the UK to introduce quiz show-type handsets into lectures for all students?

Edinburgh University is already using the technology, similar to that used in the TV show Who Wants to be a Millionaire, for science classes.

Now, university officials plan to give every student their own handset within three years.

The technology allows lecturers to ask classes of up to 400 students a multiple-choice question.

Students then beam their answers through a remote-control unit and software calculates the percentage of correct answers.

Academics at the university claim the system is crucial in assessing whether a large class has understood a particular topic.

Dr Simon Bates, co-ordinator of physics teaching at Edinburgh University, said: "It is tremendously useful because it keeps students engaged by breaking the monotony of listening to someone talk for 50 minutes.

"It also gives them immediate feedback on what they, and the rest of the class, understand or don't understand about a topic.

"They like the fact it is anonymous - there's comfort in finding out 50 per cent of the class don't understand this particular topic, not just you."

Dr Bates added: "Traditionally, you'd find out how much they knew when you set the exam and marked it. But getting that feedback almost in real time allows you to make adjustments and keeps you on your toes."

The current system is installed in all of the science faculty's lecture theatres. However, Dr Nick Hulton, dean of learning and teaching in science and engineering, revealed that university officials were so pleased with the project that they were preparing to upgrade it.

In October, the university will switch from infrared to a radio-frequency system which will be widely introduced so any lecturer who wants to use it can.

Dr Hulton said: "The plan is that every student in the first and second year, when we have the larger lectures, would have their own clicker that they would just bring to every lecture within three years."

Bids are out to tender, but the project is likely to cost thousands of pounds, with each handset costing around £25.

Dr Hulton added: "If you think that is going to be the lifetime of their education, then compared to other things it is not a very significant cost - it is affordable compared to a textbook."