

INSANELY GREAT!

Weston College and Priory Community School

Inspiring students across the curriculum with iPad

The music department at Weston College decided to help students improve their performance skills by creating a custom app that would allow them to take part in guitar, drum and bass lessons over the web or on an iPad. After we set them up with Sony Z5 cameras and several iPad 2 devices, they were able to put together a professional-looking app, and roll it out not only at the college, but to several secondary schools in the area.

Creating condensed lessons

After being hit by a combination of growing student numbers and budget cuts, Weston College's music faculty were beginning to feel the strain. "As a manager of a very busy and a very successful music course, I was confronted with, how would I teach one hundred plus students the guitar, for example, with a limited budget and limited hours?" explained Curriculum Manager Paul Raymond.

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Paul Raymond **Curriculum Manager, Weston College.**

Aware that they were dealing with a generation of "digital natives" who were as likely to have learned an instrument by watching YouTube tutorials as by having traditional lessons, Paul and the rest of the music faculty decided to put together a series of condensed video lessons that students could view online. "Every one of our students uses the internet, uses YouTube as a resource to learn, whether they're recording, practising or learning new tunes. That's opened up a massive opportunity to us," said music lecturer and bass tutor Richie Blake.



Working with...



In a nutshell...

Who are Weston College?

One of the leading colleges in the west of England, Weston College offer over 100 vocational courses, 27 A Levels, a range of apprenticeships and even some degrees.

What did they need?

Cameras, editing tools and iPad devices to allow their music department to create and deliver an iPad app (and so that media students could brush up their camera skills).

How did Jigsaw24 help?

We provided Weston's media department with Sony Z5 cameras and sourced iPad 2 devices for their music department and some feeder schools.

What were the benefits?

- Students in the college and its feeder schools can now use the iTutorus app to learn independently, revisiting content or learning ahead of the class schedule.
- Tutors can monitor individual progress and provide more specific feedback than before, even though they're working with larger classes.

For more information on how iPad could transform your classroom, get in touch on the details below.





The college quickly realised that the video lessons would be useful outside the classroom too, and decided that rather than simply making them available on the school network, they'd place them on YouTube and, for maximum portability, create an app called iTutorus which would be available to students via iPad and iPhone. "I think using the iPad is particularly appropriate because it's what students want to use. They naturally interact with technology; they're digital natives and that's how their minds work," Paul explained.

Developing the app

The app was initially developed by Richard King, one of Weston's Audio Technicians, who'd previously done some development work for the iPhone. "Developing for the iPad is a challenge," he told us. "Apple put a lot of restrictions on their developers, but that's just to make the user experience better, so even though you have the challenge of developing around them, at the end you get something with an intuitive user interface and experience."

Making the app as intuitive as possible was a key goal for Richard, along with making it "really fun to use" and ensuring that "students were able to access the content without the actual app getting in the way."

Reactions from staff and students so far have been overwhelmingly positive. "My favourite thing is the way you can split the screen between the actual camera shot and the PDF, which you can scroll down at your own pace," said guitar tutor Cliff Moore. "You can think, 'I'll pause that and learn that piece of music there,' and then carry on with the lesson, and it's just a beautiful, progressive move all the time."

Sourcing content from students

To create content for the app, Weston turned to students from its Media Studies and Art & Design courses. Three musically inclined graphic design students were recruited to put together PDFs to run alongside the lessons, and a series of posters to promote iTutorus. As well as brushing up on their music theory, working on the iTutorus project has given students the opportunity to work with clients and to a brief - a key part of their FdA course. "It's just good to get to work with clients, especially when you're working in an area you love," explained Nick Reardon, one of the trio of designers. "It's been really good to get experience at industry level."



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Corry Raymond, a media student who was commissioned to create intros for the guitar, bass and drum videos, was a big fan of the college's Sony Z5 cameras. The camera's manual ring controls made filming "a lot more organic. I could move at my own pace, setting how many seconds I wanted [the focus to take] to go from here. I love depth of field, I love focus pulls, I love all of that stuff. So to be able to do all that with my hand is amazing."

Next came the task of actually putting the videos together. Media lecturer Richard Edkins was already working on another cross-discipline project, in which media students filmed live music lessons so that the musicians could review their own performances. Armed with the college's Z5s, he and the students set about making 30 short videos on drum, bass and guitar techniques, then edited them together in Final Cut Pro. "It's been an excellent opportunity for both departments to work together," he said. "Working on live projects like this really sharpens students' camera technique. They've got to work to a deadline and under pressure, as [the footage] needs to be broadcast quality, so I think it really ups their game."

Rolling the project out to feeder schools

After seeing how much students at Weston responded to iTutorus, Paul and his team decided to roll out the app to five local feeder schools. "Everyone was very positive," said Paul. "I showed [the Heads of Music] what we'd pre-prepared and they all loved it and thought it was a fantastic opportunity."

Weston secured funding to provide each feeder school with iPad devices of their own, then got back in touch with Jigsaw24. "We've been working directly with Brett at Jigsaw24, and he's been constantly solid, dependable and positive," said Paul. "Whenever we've had any equipment needs, he's always been there to advise us, he always gets us the best price and whenever there have been any problems he's been very quick to respond."

"The post sales support is definitely the best of any of our suppliers," agreed Richard King. "Jigsaw24 always deal with any problems we have on the same day."

Independent learning at Priory School

Clive Day, the Head of Creative Arts at Priory School, has been an avid supporter of the iTutorus project. "I use it right across the board, from year 7s to year 11s," he explained. "The response has been very positive, especially from the younger students, who see it as a really big privilege to be able to work on their own and take their time with it. It's a big thing for me, the fact that they can go back again and watch lessons several times."

Students who wouldn't have picked up an instrument before are finding iTutorus really accessible. "This is providing students with lessons they just would not have come across without this technology," said Cliff. "It's evolved to the point where students are coming back after school and at break times and asking to borrow the iPads, so they can carry on learning independently."

Looking forward...

"Once this is established, we'd like to see it in other subject areas, not just the creative industries," said Sarah Clark, the Head of the Creative Arts Faculty at Weston. "We've thought about maths and languages, but we can't think of an area of the curriculum that wouldn't benefit from this technology."

Richie Blake is keen to involve more feeder schools in the project. "If we can start running this in feeder schools and further afield, it all comes back to raising standards. Further down the line, any tutor will get a student with a solid foundation in good technique, good theory, and we can start them at college running rather than walking, so they can realise their potential in as short a time as possible." Part of this plan involves creating The Green Room, an online community where students can upload performances they've recorded on the iPad, and receive peer feedback before assessments.

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