

iPads and iBooks provide a rich distance learning environment

This exemplar is relevant to Digital Student challenges:

Deliver a robust, flexible digital environment

Ensure an inclusive student experience, using technology to overcome disadvantage

In 2010, the Department of Exercise and Sport Science at Manchester Metropolitan University identified that its Distance Learning Sport Science degree needed a makeover. Feedback from students suggested that the course needed to become more modern, engaging and interactive if they were to appreciate the subject fully. The course team received backing for an initiative that provided all students with their own iPad at induction. Course materials are now authored using iBooks Author and downloaded directly to students' iPads. In subjects such as physiology, psychology, biomechanics and practical skills, the interactive resources are particularly valuable for exploring complex structures and processes. iPads are robust enough to be taken into settings where sport is practiced, allowing students to bridge the gap between their real-world interests and the topics of study. Apps, video and intuitive ways of note-taking are all available within a dedicated virtual learning environment that they can access reliably whenever and wherever they are.

The course leader says that this has *'had a dramatic impact on the way distance learning students study and learn... Given the variety of our student population, this can be at the training ground in between sessions, while posted in Iraq, or sitting on the sofa while the kids watch TV.'* Encouraging the students to use the iPads 'as their own' helps them to integrate learning into life. Students say:

'I love all of the embedded links', 'very suitable for my learning style'. 'If I have a break at work, I'll use it if I can. It's very useful that you can take it anywhere rather than carry books', 'if I've got an hour between classes, I'll sit there with my iPad'. Their tutor finds 'students are commenting more and more about studying on public transport, in between training sessions or over lunch at work'.

Four years on, the programme continues to develop as staff and students find new ways of using the iPad creatively in sports science.

How does this meet the challenge?

- A single device with a range of apps and pre-loaded materials really meets the needs of this particular group of students (home- work- and field-based, disparate, struggling to fit learning into busy lives).
- Interactive materials are particularly effective for exploring complex systems of the human mind and body.
- Students are all using the same device and learning environment, which levels out inequalities and supports cohort learning.

Find out more

- [Course web site](#)
- [Presentation to ELESIG Northwest](#)
- [Student testimonials](#)

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