



The next stage in the development of a Departmental Website?

“Supporting independent learning in Geography through Personalised Learning Spaces”

All pupils need to be able to access a personal online workspace, capable of supporting an e-portfolio, by 2007-08 (specific target in DfES e-strategy)

Personalised Learning Spaces - VIRTUAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

What is a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE)?

“A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) is a software system designed to facilitate teachers in the management of educational courses for their students, especially by helping teachers and learners with course administration. The system can often track the learners' progress, which can be monitored by both teachers and learners. While often thought of as primarily tools for distance education, they are most often used to supplement the face-to-face classroom.” (Wikipedia)

Digital Brain – A Virtual Learning Environment

There are a number of VLE's At St Ivo we use Digitalbrain - a powerful VLE used by many educational institutions within the UK.



The table below gives a brief overview of some of the functionality of digitalbrain:

School Portal	The overall school portal gives the School a virtual web presence with individual homepages to support key groups within the school such as individual departments as well as home-school links; The benefit is that as opposed to just a website, students and staff can fully interact with the portal by logging in both at home and school. Both creating and utilizing content whilst also storing their own files in their individual areas.
E-learning content	Content can either be placed on the digitalbrain platform (e.g. powerpoints, word documents, existing web pages etc. uploaded) or created on the digitalbrain platform. Digitalbrain enables both staff and student to easily create their own webpages with online publishing tools. Templates already exist which teachers (and students) can simply adapt and add content (text, photos, hyperlinks etc.) to.
Learning Manager	It is possible to combine existing resources / digital assets to create on-line communities (i.e. department or even key stage specific) and courses. Assignments can be set online with details of the assignments, links to associated resources (background reading, supporting files etc.). Students can then submit work on or offline and marks can be stored in students individual markbooks Self-assessment multiple-choice / true-false answers can be created using a template. These are scored automatically upon completion by students and results automatically entered in markbook.
Personal Organisation Tools	Each user has a suite of personal organisational tools available to them – including an online contacts directory and personal calendar (as well as personal entries, assignment deadlines, course deadlines etc. are automatically added)
File Sharing	Each user has an online storage area where files can be stored and accessed both at home and in school. Users can access others users stored resources, enabling file sharing with other teachers, students (and also between schools who are part of the digitalbrain network). Access permissions are set to enable or restrict access to a users files as required.
Electronic Communication	Everyone with a digitalbrain account has an e-mail account Threaded discussions can be easily set up to encourage discussion and debate between students A live discussion (“chat room”) facility is available, with or without a moderator, facilitating remote teacher support or peer discussion.

Digital Brain as a VLE (Virtual Learning Environment)

Case Study:

4.1 The AS/A2 Geography Online Learning Community (GOLC)

The Geography Online Learning Community homepage provides the main gateway to electronic learning resources and support for your A2 Geography Course.

You can design your page layout as you wish – this is just an example of how it has been used by the Geography Department at St Ivo.

St. Ives Learning Community Portal | PATCHwork | Staff Resources | Curriculum Area | Childrens Trust | Primary Liaison

Calendar | CCC Education Portal | Search Engines | Whats New? | Extended Learning

Geography log out

Calendar

Thursday, 21st July
• 11:45 End of term
(Ends: 04 Sept 2005 11:45)

Monday, 5th Sept
• 09:00 School Starts

Tuesday, 6th Sept
• 00:00 Start of AS Courses

Community: Geography

Welcome to the St Ivo School
Geography Department Online
Learning Community for AS/A2
Geographers

Please select from the following links:

[AS Geography](#)
[Geography in the News](#)
[Geobytes Homepage](#)

[A2 Geography](#)
[Fieldwork](#)
[St Ivo Homepage](#)

You are visitor number: 000258

Digitalbrain

- My Work
- Resources
- Member Groups
- Leader Groups
- Calendar
- Discussion

Discussion

Using an Online Learning Community - 1 (1 new)

GOLC Calendar

This calendar is shared by all GOLC members (both AS and A2) students and it shows dates that affects both year groups.

Students cannot edit / add to this calendar as it is shared – however they can return to their personal calendar by going to **Tools** menu on the toolbar (students personal calendar will also show the dates shown here as reminders of deadlines etc.)

Discussions

These online discussions are open to both AS / A2 members and students can contribute to them simply by clicking on the relevant discussion they want to take part in.

This is to be used to debate discussion topics as well as a discussion forum for help with essays / coursework etc. As it can be viewed and contributed to by all students it be useful for peer mentoring and also advice given by staff is available to all students.

These are the main access links to the electronic resources I have made available through the GOLC:

- AS Geography** – This is the main area of resources and information dedicated to the AS course (it includes links back to Geobytes and topic specific resources) as well as a lesson diary
- A2 Geography** - This is the main area of resources and information dedicated to the A2 course (it includes links back to Geobytes and topic specific resources) as well as a lesson diary
- Geography in the News** – This news feed is regularly updated with both Department news and Geography news from around the world that can provide a greater breadth of knowledge for AS/A2 students.
- Fieldwork** – links to fieldwork information for both AS / A2 – includes photographs and associated resources.
- Geobytes Homepage** (direct link to Geography Department Website)
- St Ivo Homepage** (direct link to St Ivo School Homepage)

You can add whatever links you wish according to what you want from your subject.

The Online Learning Resources (e.g. A2 Geography)

A2 Course Overview



SAMPLE PAGE

The A2 course consists of 3 units of work (Units 4, 5 and 6). As well as both physical and human units, unit 6 is a synoptic paper which includes an essay question and a resources based exercise.

The assessment weighting for the A2 course is as follows:

Unit 4 - Physical Systems, Processes & Patterns - 15%

Unit 5 - Human Systems, Processes & Patterns - 15%

Unit 6 - Synoptic Paper - 20%

The remaining 50% is made up of the mark achieved at AS.

Major Texts supporting the course:

Palmer, A and Yates, N - **Edexcel (A) Advanced Geography**, Philip Allan Updates. *(a new text written specifically for this course)*

Waugh, D. **Geography: An Integrated Approach**, Nelson Thornes

Cook et al. **Geography in Focus**, Pearson Schools



A2 Course Overview

A2 Course Overview

A2 Lesson Diary

A2 Online Course

Unit 4 - Physical Systems, Processes and Patterns

Unit 5 - Human Systems, Processes and Patterns

Unit 6 - Synoptic: People and their Environments

Advanced Extension Paper

Geography at University

A2 GOLC Online User Manual

The GOLC online resources are arranged under key headings.

Examples of content include:

A Lesson Diary – a brief overview of the each lessons content with links to resources used and links to further background reading, related assignments etc. to support follow up work.

Specific links to web pages

Discussion forum threads

Course Overview Unit Specific Materials (including revision materials etc.)

CREATING ONLINE WEB CONTENT

Digital Brain lets you create your own online web content which can be viewed and used by students. Web pages can be created with links to web pages, links to other resources (e.g. word documents, data files, pdf files etc.. stored in teachers (or subject/department) area; photographs, flash content (e.g. slideshows, interactive games etc.); multiple choice quizzes etc. Learning module folders can be used to make navigation between pages easy and logical for both staff and students.

Example: How has this facility been used for the Geography Online Community?

The structure of the Geography Online Learning Community (GOLC) is one that follows the basic AS/A2 course structure according to the individual units that are covered.

Each unit provides links to electronic based resources to support the topic areas; this includes links to resources within the Geobytes website, as well as department resources which have been made available online through creating electronic content and links specifically in this area. (includes revision materials, online support resources, links to websites, data files, worksheets, powerpoints from lessons etc.)

There is also a section here dedicated to the AS coursework unit with online access to resources such as photographs, data files etc. to support the write up of the coursework as well as photographs and other related documents. (As digital brain is a personal storage area – staff can save data files etc.. and make them accessible by students)

The Online Learning Course Facility








As part of a particular community (e.g. Geography Community), individual courses can be set up (e.g. AS Course; A2 course; Year 11; Year 10 etc.). This provides facilities for setting and managing assignments online which can be linked in to the electronic resources made available as part of the community. As an example, below is the A2 Online Course Homepage which complements the GOLC by enabling interactive e-learning. This is the area through which online lessons and assignments can be set and in which individual students can track their progress (as well as staff) through a personal mark book (which feeds into a whole class online mark book for staff). Students can also view feedback given for the work that they have completed and handed in.

Students access this by selecting Courses from either their Personal Homepage or a Community Homepage (such as the GOLC) (click on e-learning on tool bar and then My Courses)

Course Calendar This is a calendar shared between all members of the A2 group with course specific dates and deadlines (this is not your personal calendar and cannot be edited).

Discussions These discussions are just allocated for members of the A2 course and will be posted throughout the duration of the course to coincide with specific topic areas

Buddy List Other members of the A2 group who are online.

-  - students can take part in the threaded discussions that are posted here or start your own
-  - student group (list of user names of other members of the A2 course)
-  - enables students to take part on online polls
-  - this is the students storage area for any work related to your assignments
-  - storage of resources related to assignments that are set.
-  - details of the assignments set, including deadlines, assessment details and direct links to relevant resources.
-  - students online markbook – you can keep track of your progress through this (including marks and feedback from the teacher)

The decision over which VLE to choose is a whole school one as it will be a whole school resource. VLE's however provide a valuable step forward for subject departments in providing more personalised and independent learning opportunities. There are many different VLE's and BECTA are currently drawing up an approved list – i.e. those that meet their criteria.

The following links / resources provide further information on VLE's

- DfES e-learning strategy document <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/e-strategy/docs/e-strategy.pdf>
- DfES Schools White Paper – “Higher Standards, Better Schools for All” <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/publications/schoolswhitepaper/pdfs/DfES-Schools%20White%20Paper.pdf>
- Learning Platforms – Q&A <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/ictis/infrastructure/learningplatforms/faq/>
- Virtual Learning Environments <http://partners.becta.org.uk/index.php?section=rh&rid=11252>
- Technology for E-learning – information with respect to buying and implementing VLE's <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=76>
- Considerations to make in choosing a VLE <http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=383>
- Good, Bad and downright ugly ways to introduce VLE's in schools http://www.chalkface.com/product_info.py?c_product_id=1464
- What the research says about VLE's in Teaching and Learning http://www.becta.org.uk/page_documents/research/wtrs_vles.pdf
- Effective use of VLE's <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/InfoKits/effective-use-of-VLEs>
- Reviewing the potential of Virtual Learning Environment's in Schools <http://osiris.sunderland.ac.uk/~cs0lha/Publications/2006/padmore-hall-hogq-paley.pdf#search=%22VLEs%20in%20schools%22>
- Developing a VLE <http://web.e2bn.net/pdfs/worksheet6.pdf#search=%22VLEs%20in%20schools%22>

There are many, many VLE's – here are just a few examples:

- Frog Teacher <http://www.frogteacher.co.uk/>
- Moodle <http://moodle.org/>
- Find out more about Moodle on the Effective ICT discussion forum <http://www.effectiveict.co.uk/forum/index.php?showforum=13>
- Fronter <http://www.fronter.co.uk/uk/>
- Microsoft Class Server Learning Platform <http://www.microsoft.com/education/classserver.mspix>
- Ramesey's <http://www.ramesys.com/>
- EduCMS – Education Content Management System <http://www.educms.co.uk/>
- Digital Brain - <http://corporate.digitalbrain.com/>
- Bodington http://sourceforge.net/forum/forum.php?forum_id=519773
- Granada Learnwise <http://www.learnwise.com/>
- Microsoft Learning Gateway <http://www.microsoft.com/education/learninggateway.mspix>
- SIMS.net Learning Environment <http://www.capitaes.co.uk/LearningPlatform/solution/index.asp>
- Kaleidos VTLE – RM's Teaching and Learning Environment <http://www.rm.com/Secondary/Products/Product.asp?cref=PD342094>