



## ***JISC RSC Scotland South & West Case Study @ Cumbernauld College***

### **Social Studies Research Lab**

#### **Summary**

The Social Studies Research Lab is a new resource for Social Studies learners to use to support their own individual learning and carry out a range of activities, group work and research. Courses that utilise the room include NQ Highers, NQ Combined Studies, Access to Social Science and HNC Social Science.

#### **About Cumbernauld College**

Cumbernauld College has two campuses. The main campus is situated in the centre of Cumbernauld town, close to many local amenities including the Tryst Sports Centre, Broadwood Stadium, Cumbernauld Theatre and the town centre shopping complex. The second campus is based in East Dunbartonshire.

#### **The challenge**

The lab is a “learner friendly” environment that contains a range of resources that the learners can access during and out with class time. These include:

- A touch screen computer used for video editing, research and statistical analysis.
- A stand alone computer for Internet research, word processing etc.
- Multi-track sound system for recording audio and sfx, mixing and modern language/ESOL speaking activity.
- 2 x iPads. These are used for general research, watching and listening to social studies podcast; using social studies Applications.
- Soft seating where learners can relax and use the iPad, read magazines/journals or carry out research interviews.
- Desk space and white boards for individual and group study, discussion, research interviews and exam preparation.
- Separate desk space with magnifier lamp for learners with visual impairments or learners who are analysing paper based “columns and rows” of statistics.
- Storage cabinets for equipment and books.



## The activity

Learners can access the lab any time during college opening hours: it is not a timetabled room. The only requirement is that they sign in for the key at the College reception and sign out. This system has worked extremely well with learners greatly appreciative of this flexibility in accessing their own quiet learning space.

## The outcomes

Events that have sprung from the lab as a new resource include:

- Extensive use by individuals to study and prepare for assessments. Groups of students have been observed supporting their peers and seem to enjoy using the white board to support this.
- Learners have, of their own volition, aside from the curriculum, carried out controlled Psychological experiments such as perception tests and responses to Gestalt images.
- The lab is used as a base for a Research Project within NQ Combined Studies focusing on “Well Being and Happiness in Scotland”.
- Learners using the iPads have stated that they really enjoy using the iPads as “something different”, a fresh method of learning using podcasts and apps. The soft seating allows them, all the more, to see this type of learning as relaxed and fun.



## The impact

The lab has had a tremendous impact on the learner experience. Students clearly take ownership and responsibility for this space and indeed value the opportunity being afforded to them by their curriculum staff and department. The lab is well used and in accepting ownership, students also increasingly take more responsibility for their own learning by engaging in peer to peer support and tutoring. The enthusiasm is tangible and is reflected in the range of student-initiated activity, such as the creation and development of a blog and other resources to support learning.

## Useful Links

<http://www.cumbernauld.ac.uk/>

[http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best\\_of\\_the\\_west/BoW.htm](http://www.rsc-sw-scotland.ac.uk/best_of_the_west/BoW.htm)

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