

Using QR codes & mobile technology with hairdressing students at Perth College UHI

Summary

This case study focuses on the use of using QR codes to provide access to interactive resources that can be used with mobile smartphones. Resources for hairdressing students included case studies, quizzes and formative assessments that included multimedia and interactivity.

The College

Perth College UHI serves a wide community, with the local learning area stretching from the banks of the River Tay to the peaks of Highland Perthshire.

The main campus is situated in the historic city of Perth, voted the best place to live in Scotland and with over 800 years of history, and the college has a range of community learning centers and lots of online courses for those who want to study from home. Paula Muir is Curriculum Co-ordinator for Hairdressing.

The Challenge

In 2010 Paula was asked to carry out a research project and chose to look at different types of technology that would be suited to Further Education courses and Skills for Work groups. The aim was to promote a blended learning approach that would help to engage and motivate the learners. Edublogs, web-quests and the use of mobile phones were the areas she chose to focus on with aim of determining the most appropriate technology in the context of the courses she is responsible for and the learners she and her colleagues work with.

Paula was keen to find tools that would be transferrable over different courses and SCQF levels to provide some consistency and allow a focus on sound pedagogy. In addition she hoped that technology would enable aspects of the Curriculum for Excellence to be achieved as learners' progress through their course. She was keen to provide multimedia tools that supported teaching strategies that helped to move learners from a behaviourist model to a constructivist pedagogic model.

Paula wanted to exploit mobile phones as her young learners are so attached to their phones and after researching a few options chose to focus on using QR codes to access resources on web-enabled smartphones. The simple, intuitive nature and ease of use was the rationale for choosing this technology.

The Activity

After some discussion with the groups involved the learners were shown how to download a QR reader onto their mobile phone. Paula created resources that can be accessed by scanning a QR code which links to a range of web based resources. Resources included case studies, videos, YouTube links, quizzes and formative assessments. Two units were chosen: level 5 Colour Hair, this is a visual unit and lends itself to this learning and teaching approach nicely and a level 4 Health & Safety unit which was chosen because she wanted to improve student engagement and motivation by introducing a new approach. Different learning styles were considered in the creation of resources. Activities were created and converted using "SoftChalk" software and hosted on the web. A QR code generator was then used to provide the image containing the access information.

The Outcomes

Feedback from learners has been very positive and a formal evaluation of the work is underway. Access to a wireless network is freely available enabling Paula to tap into the potential of mobile technologies and tapping into the technologies that learners use. They have flexible access at home, travelling to and from college or around the college on breaks and lunch. Anecdotally, the activity promotes discussion over subject topics and greatly aids reflection, helping students to fill gaps in knowledge.

Using mobile devices enables online activities to be integrated into learning and teaching without the need to prebook computer labs and provides a lot more flexibility, and spontaneity around the learning experience. In terms of scalability and sustainability, as long as alternatives are provided to ensure that where access is limited learners are not disadvantaged. Alternatives are VLE and paper based accessibility. Paula is confident that the model could be rolled out across other areas of the curriculum. Some assistance in preparing and converting materials may be required by the Learning Technologies Centre within Perth College.

Finding ways to engage some learners in activities out with class requires innovative strategies. Providing resources in this format which does engage learners and utilise the technologies that they use all the time for personal activities, may help to meet the challenges of reduced teaching times that staff are currently experiencing. This also encourages self directed learning.

Overall the work that Paula has been involved with has encouraged others in the department to engage more with technology. In recognition of the benefits accrued, another member of staff has been given some remission to develop something similar for beauty therapy and this would indicate that having a technology advocate in a department may help others to better appreciate the positive impact that technology can have.

Lessons Learnt

It was necessary to establish access to the technology at the outset and ensure that alternatives were available. Assistance around the occasional technical problem had to be sought e.g. optimising phone browsers and in some cases downloading different ones from the default was necessary. Mobile technology encouraged learners to work independently or with peers depending on the task. Findings from these tasks are discussed back in the classroom with lecturer and peers. The variety of these approaches allowed the learner to engage with: individual learning style, inquiry based learning, blended learning, self directed study and peer work.

Within the broader scope of Paula's research, WebQuests provided a model which supported inquiry based learning, self directed learning, group work and peer evaluation which proved successful. Using EduBlog was more of a challenge; learners were not as engaged and motivated by this approach. Paula introduced other web based tools that could be used within the EduBlog to provide more of a web page feel to them. Course information and students practical work was also included to allow parents and school teachers gain a understanding of the course rationale and the activities the learners were participating in.

Useful Links

WebQuest <http://zunal.com/webquest.php?w=84473>

Hairdressing Educational web site <http://hairdressing.ac.uk>

Disclaimer

The Regional Support Centre Scotland supports the development of educational e-learning. We may refer to specific products, processes or services. Such references are examples and are not endorsements or recommendations and should not be used for product endorsement purposes.

Appendix 1 – QR Codes used for a variety of different learning activities – use a QR reader to access the resources from your mobile device.

GH9 Change Hair Colour

Please use the **QR** code to access
your formative assessment



NVQ Level 2 Hairdressing

GH9 Change Hair Colour

Test your knowledge

Please use the **QR** codes to test your
colouring knowledge



**Creative Colour
Video**



Toner Quiz



Case Study

NVQ Level 2 Hairdressing

GH9 **Change Hair Colour**

Test your knowledge

Please use the **QR** codes to access
The Matrix Colouring Quizzes



Bleach



Color Sync



Hi-lift



SoColor

NVQ Level 2 Hairdressing

Peer Discussion

Please use the **QR** code below and discuss the following –

1. Describe the new colours and tones for 2012.
2. Describe the haircuts, mentioning the angles and techniques used to create them.
3. How can we turn these high fashion styles into commercial styles?
4. Likes and dislikes for the new trends of 2012.



Trend Show: the 2012 Haute Couture trends revealed