

Distinctly IH Palermo Language Centre

Adapting to fully remote learning during Covid-19

IH Palermo Language Centre had been working with GEL for several months before the Coronavirus crisis, at which point circumstances required the school to adapt to fully remote learning in an extremely demanding timeframe. The GELnet school platform was an integral part of their response. We asked Jenny Holden, the DOS and Head of Teacher Training at IH Palermo Language Centre, about the switch to becoming an online school, and the role of the GELnet platform.

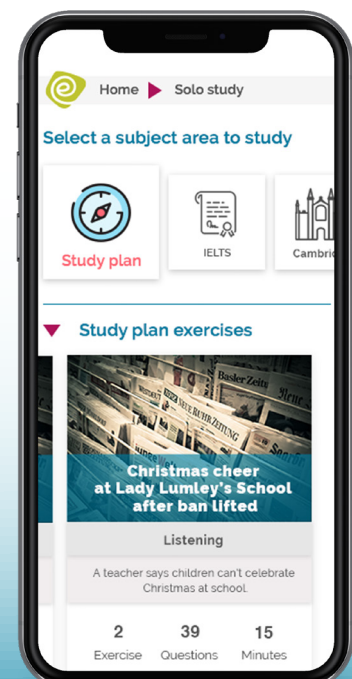
All in 1 place

The GELnet system for language schools combines an online course planner, academic calendar and digital content. Combined with live online lessons provided by IH Palermo Language Centre teachers, the system provides a focal point for staff, students and online programmes at a school. The students' mobile interface gives them their weekly plan, assignments, and links to their live lessons. *"The students now know where to go to get their work. They have a hub for courses using GEL. We're getting students to look at the calendars and see what's going on in lessons each week and get their homework from there."*

Online Academics

GEL assignments are supporting the flipped classroom. Online activities mapped to IH Palermo Language Centre's course, with automated checking and feedback, all work together to support video lessons. *"Students can do more online preparation autonomously, prior to class. When the student then comes to video class, the teacher doesn't have to spend so much time checking and clarifying meaning because students will have done that work themselves. The process makes the online lesson far more efficient and effective. Teachers can make the most of classroom time with a communicative focus."*

A critical technical component of this is GEL's proprietary AIMS system which maps course books or an aims-based syllabus to digital content, other course books or class resources. Teachers are able to maintain quality by putting forward content directly related to the aims to be covered in the video lessons. IH Palermo Language Centre teachers are able to assign digital content directly related to course book exercises. *"We're not normally an online school so we're continuing to use course books with the GEL platform."* Academic management need to stay just as close to an online classroom, and GEL dashboards allow for this. GELnet includes a full data intelligence platform so that everyone can see what's happening. This is particularly important when everyone is remote. *"I use the dashboard reports to check how classes are progressing and what teachers are doing. This has all been very helpful."*



School channels of communication

One of the big challenges of moving online is going paperless. English language schools have specific needs and teacher feedback needs to be recorded, packaged and monitored by the school to uphold quality standards. GEL's Document Assignment function addresses this. *"Previously teachers would have just written feedback directly on paper-based assignments. This is no longer practical. The GEL Document Assignment function gives teachers a way to manage written assignments and provide feedback to students."* Another challenge with online courses is the lack of a physical staff room. GEL's Documents and Notes feature allows teachers to collaborate. *"Previously if a teacher had a problem with a student they would come and see me (DOS) face to face. Teachers now report any individual student issue using the Documents and Notes feature on the platform"*. School communication on the platform also avoids staff and student privacy issues. *"Teachers don't have to share personal emails and details with students. This has been very useful for adult courses, but particularly significant given safeguarding for young learners."*



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"Online teaching can give the impression that it's just a teacher in their bedroom. GEL helps us to maintain our identity online. We are able to present ourselves as a professional, high quality school." Jenny emphasised how it's essential for schools to keep doing the things that made them successful as a 'face to face' school. Regular and personal communication between staff and students is critical. *"We need to keep doing assessments to ensure learners feel they're receiving the same quality. This conversion has been a rapid process and our next step is to put our one to one tutorials online."* GEL will be able to help ensure these continue to happen regularly and to keep track of how students are feeling about their lessons.

Integrating video classes and GEL

GEL integrates with most video call platforms. IH Palermo Language Centre use Zoom. *"A permanent virtual Zoom classroom link on the platform has really helped our online learning programme."* The students' academic calendar becomes the organisational centre of the virtual school, with schedules, lessons, links, signposting and support along the way. *"We made a zoom tutorial video to show them how to go through GEL to get to their zoom live lesson. Teacher plans include 'What you need for this lesson' (e.g. Headset and mic, laptop if possible, stable internet connection etc.), so that online lessons can be as strong as possible."*

About Guided e-Learning

Guided e-Learning Ltd was founded in June 2006 and offers privately branded, mobile first platforms for English Language Learning. The GELnet platform is chosen by industry leading schools because of the commitment to quality and pedagogy. Clients include The British Council, International House schools, Bell, EC, and ELS to name but a few. Please get in contact for more information.



Rob Andrew MA, DELTA
Account Manager
p| 0207 735 2538
m| 07828 605565

sales@guidedelearning.com
www.guidedelearning.com
second Floor, 32 Brixton Road,
London, SW9 6BU