

BUILDING WITH PURPOSE



ABOUT THE WOLVERHAMPTON SCREEN SCHOOL

The University of Wolverhampton has just completed work on upgrading the Alan Turing Building which hosts the Wolverhampton Screen School facilities. This is part of a £5m refurbishment at the university which is set to benefit students studying film and television production, animation, games design and multimedia journalism.

The Wolverhampton Screen School investment epitomises the university's belief that education creates opportunity; that by providing students with the latest industry-relevant skills they can match employer demand. To be effective this in turn requires students having access to the latest state-of-the-art technology which has now been installed across the campus. The same technology they will encounter after they graduate.

The new three-camera greenscreen television studio feeds a Newtek Tricaster 2 Elite system with 2 stripe control panel and talkback in the adjoining production gallery. The fully sound-proofed studio is well equipped with an Acebil PD3800 pedestal, 4.8m track and dolly, CueiT prompting, jibs, sliders, multiple drapes, lighting grid and 44 Ianiro 200w bi-colour LED lights. The department has a total of seven JVC HD-HDR ENG studio cameras with 2/3" HD lenses.

The new Avid Pro Tools-centric Foley room includes an Avid S3 16-fader EUCON Control Service, Avid Pro Tools HDX Core with Pro Tools | Ultimate, Avid Pro Tools MTRX Base unit, Dante Interface and multiple plug-ins including iZotope, all running off an 8-core, 96GB, 1TB rack mounted Apple Mac Pro with Genelec speakers and Sennheiser and RODE microphones.

The building also now includes five edit suites running on Lenovo ThinkStation P620s with AMD Thread Ripper Pro 3955WX GPUs, Lenovo ThinkVision 4K monitoring as well as Eizo 4K-UHD grading monitors and access to multiple 40TB Avid NEXIS | PRO servers. The computer games design students benefit from a second audio suite with another Avid S3 console with a similar configuration, LG monitoring including 4K and a fully equipped studio with drapes, lighting and a control room.

The new Wolverhampton Screen School further benefits from a new production space, an equipment media store, new Mac labs, staff offices and a production base room.



Find out more at wlv.ac.uk and search for Screen School

Requiring the services of an industry expert to help with the design and install of a state-of-the-art facility for students studying film and television production, animation, computer games design and multimedia journalism at its Wolverhampton Screen School, The University of Wolverhampton sought to find a supplier that could meet its vision and challenging timescales. Via a sub-contract with Academia Limited, Altered Images were engaged to bring the vision to reality. The ambition was to nurture an applicable skill set and technology confidence within their students ahead of future employment.



Dr Pritpal Sembi, Deputy Head of School (Media), Wolverhampton School of Art, University of Wolverhampton: "There was clear potential to develop our educational portfolio within the black country. Our agenda is to ensure that our degree courses provide industry-relevant skills with academic standards and practical learning outcomes so that our students can fulfil increasing demand within the workplace.

"We looked at the ScreenSkills and BBC reports, including the Nations and Regions report, and listened to industry. ScreenSkills was reporting a labour shortage with increased opportunities for new entrants and the lead universities could take in addressing that issue. We wanted to be sure the kit we invested in was ScreenSkills compliant and in line with our students' future employment prospects.

"On the second-floor of the Alan Turing Building we can now offer computer game design and animation and a soon-to-be-launched VFX Masters will have a base there as well. We also offer a module on 3D production which we developed in partnership with industry. On the ground floor is film and television production, including a motion capture studio that links to the second floor, and multimedia journalism and a theoretical course on media with some shared modules.

"We wanted to build something special that would replicate industry at the cutting edge. We understood the limits of our own knowledge and the need to hand over to an external 'wow' factor supplier to help us identify where we needed to invest. We had worked with Tim Cunningham (now sadly departed) previously when developing the original studios so we were confident with Academia's choice of sub-contractor in Altered Images and Peter Billing has been there with us for throughout this new chapter."



INDUSTRY STANDARD KIT ACROSS THE SITE

Martin Evans, Principal Technician for IT, University of Wolverhampton: "Our original kit list was very different and Covid changed that specification towards a more studio industry standard camera-chain with JVC cameras feeding into a Newtek Tricaster that writes directly to an Avid NEXIS server.

"Our old studio had none of the bells and whistles we now have. We wanted to build in future-proofing so that we can stream directly to the web as well as having a more traditional output. Having NDI also allows us to access data across the building and externally, which is especially helpful for the journalism department.

"We can now provide virtual sets, based on greenscreen, supported by Unreal Engine. Newtek is a good fit for us and we can easily bring in graphics. The new studio is way beyond what we were hoping for right the way through to the latest LED lighting with effects that we hadn't even thought about.

"Avid Pro Tools and the Avid S3 consoles were recommended for the Foley room and recording studio. Not only does this offer best-in-class audio mixing but being industry standards, our students can learn their craft and translate that knowledge into their future employment prospects where the same applications and similar desks will be familiar.

ABOUT ALTERED IMAGES

Altered Images are leading experts in workflow system design and major resellers of technology for broadcast, television production, education and corporate communications.

Altered Images has a highly skilled team with decades of experience serving the UK creative industries. Every project we undertake has its own unique requirements and we look to tailor technology choice based on what the project needs, rather than a one size fits all approach.

The Altered Images team has a detailed understanding of the production business, the way visual communications technology works, how it can best work together and critically how production professionals can get the most out of it.

"And with Avid NEXIS, we gain from having localised pools of storage across all departments. This allows students working on different courses to work collaboratively which is really progressive. For example, the mo-cap students can feed into gaming and a project can go full circle across multiple disciplines. From studio production to editing, game development and audio mixing, we have an integrated and elegant workflow across the building and even off site with NDI."

WORKING WITH ALTERED IMAGES

Dr Pritpal Sembi: "When we encountered problems, many beyond our control, like supply issues during Covid, Altered Images always found alternatives and solutions. The tech team has been fantastic throughout the build. When we thought we might fall flat, they picked it up and made it happen.

"I would definitely recommend Altered Images. No matter how current our staff might be, we're not seeing the wider picture of what industry facilities across the country are offering. Altered Images have that broad overview. They are part of that conversation as well as being in touch with the vendors. And that knowledge, network and understanding fed into the project.

"I couldn't have envisaged just how well it has come out. I am over the moon with it. I never tire of walking around the space. I love it."



Images, © University of Wolverhampton

We pride ourselves on our pre-sales consultancy where we work with our customers to identify the best technology solutions. Our skilled engineers take the headache out of the install and we offer unparalleled post-sales support and maintenance expertise.

Whatever your requirements, whether it's advice on systems and installations, hiring in equipment or buying the most up to date production technology, come and talk to us and we will deliver the very best service available.

