





NM1042 - MERN Stack Powered by MongoDB:

ONLINE LEARNING PLATFORM

A PROJECT REPORT

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JEPPIAAR ENGINEERING COLLEGE ANNA UNIVERSITY: CHENNAI 600 025

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BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE

This	Project	Report	" (Online	Learning	Platform	" is	the	Bonafide	work
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1. Introduction:

1.1 Project Title : Online Learning Platform

The Online Learning Platform enables educators and learners to connect through an interactive and feature-rich web application. It supports course creation, enrollment, and progress tracking, making education accessible worldwide.

1.2 Team Members:

Renuga S - Project Manager

Responsible for overseeing the planning, execution, and completion of projects, ensuring that
goals, timelines, resources, and budgets are managed effectively, while facilitating
communication between team members.

Anovah Sherin H - Frontend Developer

• Responsible for creating user interfaces using HTML for structure, CSS for styling, and JavaScript for interactivity, ensuring responsive and accessible web applications.

Swarna Latha V - Backend Developer

 Responsible for building and maintaining the server-side logic, databases, APIs, and application integrations to ensure seamless functionality, security, and performance of web applications.

Clarrieous Athiraj B - UI & UX Developer

• Responsible for translating design mockups into interactive, responsive, and visually appealing user interfaces, ensuring seamless user experiences.

AN Visalakshi - Database Administrator

 Responsible for designing and implementing user-centric experiences by understanding user needs, creating wireframes and prototypes, and ensuring functionality aligns with intuitive and accessible design principles.

2. Project Overview:

2.1 Purpose and Goals:

The Online Learning Platform aims to provide an accessible and interactive learning experience for users worldwide, offering a variety of courses and progress tracking.

• Accessible Education for All:

To provide a platform where learners of all backgrounds can access quality educational content, making learning convenient and flexible.

• Support for Multiple Learning Styles:

To cater to diverse learning styles by offering multimedia-rich content (videos, quizzes, and articles) alongside text-based resources.

• Empowering Instructors:

To give instructors the tools to create, manage, and deliver engaging courses while tracking student progress.

• Real-time Learning Experience:

To create an interactive learning environment that enables real-time communication between students and instructors through discussion forums, chat features, and live sessions.

• Scalable and Efficient System:

To build a scalable, performance-oriented system that can handle a growing number of users and content without compromising speed or quality.

• User-Centric Interface:

Develop a clean and intuitive user interface for both learners and instructors, ensuring ease of navigation and a pleasant learning experience.

• Comprehensive Course Management:

Allow instructors to create, modify, and manage their courses efficiently, including adding videos, assignments, and quizzes.

• Seamless Enrollment and Payment:

Provide an easy-to-use enrollment process for users to sign up for courses and integrate secure payment gateways for premium content.

• Real-Time Progress Tracking:

Offer personalized dashboards that allow learners to track their progress, view course completion rates, and set learning goals.

• Interactive Feedback System:

Implement a system that allows students to provide feedback on courses, enabling instructors to improve their content and maintain high-quality learning.

• Robust Authentication and Security:

Implement a secure user authentication system using JWT (JSON Web Tokens) to protect personal and course data, ensuring privacy and security.

• Cross-Platform Accessibility:

Ensure the platform is fully responsive, allowing users to access the content across various devices such as smartphones, tablets, and desktops.

Scalable Architecture:

Use the MERN stack (MongoDB, Express.js, React, Node.js) to create a flexible and scalable backend capable of handling a large volume of users and data.

• Analytics and Reporting:

Provide insights into course performance, user engagement, and progress via an admin dashboard to help instructors and admins make data-driven decisions.

• Global Reach and Multi-Language Support:

Enable multi-language support to cater to a global audience, making it easier for users from different regions to learn and access content.

2.2 Features:

Accessible Education: Courses available anytime, anywhere.

Scalable System: Designed to handle high user traffic.

Secure Environment: Robust authentication and data protection.

User Authentication: Secure sign-up/login.

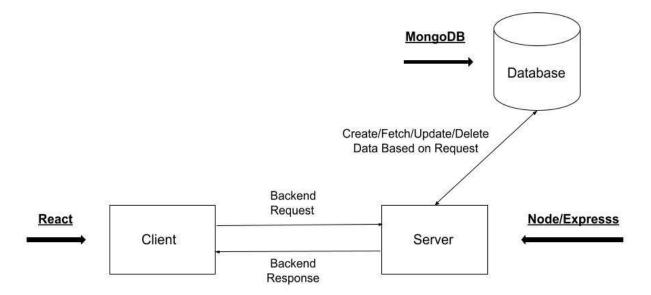
Course Management: Create, update, and delete courses.

Progress Tracking: Visualize individual progress via dashboards.

Real-time Notifications: Instant updates on enrollment and feedback.

- User registration and authentication.
- Course browsing, enrollment, and progress tracking.
- Admin panel for course management.
- Real-time feedback and notifications.
- Secure payment gateway for premium content.

3. Architecture:



High-Level System Overview

The platform comprises three core layers:

- 1. **Frontend (React)**: Handles the client-side rendering and user interactions.
- 2. **Backend (Node.js + Express.js)**: Processes requests, manages business logic, and connects to the database.
- 3. **Database (MongoDB)**: Stores all user, course, and progress data.

3.1 Frontend Architecture

- Component-based Design: React components for modularity and reusability.
- Routing: React Router ensures smooth navigation.

3.2 Backend Architecture

- API Design: RESTful endpoints for efficient communication.
- Middleware: Implements authentication and validation processes.

3.3 Database Architecture

Collections:

- o Users: Stores user profiles and roles.
- o Courses: Details about courses, instructors, and content.
- Enrollments: Tracks user enrollments and progress.

4. Setup Instructions:

4.1 Prerequisites

Before starting the development of an online learning platform using the MERN stack (MongoDB, Express.js, React, Node.js), ensure the following prerequisites are met. These include the software, tools, and basic knowledge required for a smooth development process.

1. Software Prerequisites

a. Node.js

• Why Required:

Node.js is the runtime environment for executing JavaScript on the server-side. It is essential for running the backend services of the platform and managing dependencies using npm (Node Package Manager).

Installation:

Download and install Node.js from Node.js Official Website.

b. MongoDB

• Why Required:

MongoDB is a NoSQL database used for storing and managing the application data. It provides a flexible schema design, making it ideal for handling various types of data, such as user details, courses, and progress tracking.

• Installation:

Download and install MongoDB Community Edition from MongoDB Official Website.

Alternatively, use a cloud-based service like MongoDB Atlas for hosting the database online.

c. Code Editor (e.g., VS Code)

• Why Required:

A code editor like Visual Studio Code helps in writing, editing, and managing the codebase efficiently. It offers features like syntax highlighting, debugging, and integration with version control.

Installation:

Download and install Visual Studio Code from VS Code Official Website.

d. Git and GitHub

• Why Required:

Git is used for version control, enabling collaboration and maintaining code history. GitHub (or any similar platform) is used for hosting the repository and facilitating team collaboration.

• Installation:

Download Git from Git Official Website and create a GitHub account.

e. Web Browser (e.g., Google Chrome)

• Why Required:

A modern web browser is necessary for testing and debugging the frontend application. Tools like Chrome DevTools assist in inspecting and debugging the HTML, CSS, and JavaScript code.

f. Postman or Similar API Testing Tool

• Why Required:

Postman is used for testing backend APIs during development. It helps validate API endpoints, request/response formats, and error handling.

• Installation:

Download Postman from Postman Official Website.

2. Knowledge Prerequisites

a. Basics of HTML, CSS, and JavaScript

• Why Required:

To build and design the frontend of the application, you need to understand:

- HTML: For structuring the content.
- **CSS**: For styling and creating responsive designs.
- o **JavaScript**: For adding interactivity to the user interface.

b. Understanding of MERN Stack

• MongoDB:

Basic knowledge of creating, querying, and managing databases.

o Example: Using commands like find(), insertOne(), or connecting via Mongoose.

• Express.js:

Familiarity with setting up a Node.js server and defining RESTful API routes.

```
o Example: app.get('/api/courses', (req, res) =>
  res.send(courses));
```

• React.js:

Understanding of React components, state, props, and hooks for building interactive UIs.

 Example: useState for managing local component state and useEffect for lifecycle methods.

• Node.js:

Knowledge of creating a server, handling requests, and interacting with the database.

o Example: Setting up middleware with app.use().

c. RESTful API Design

• Why Required:

To design and implement API endpoints for communication between the frontend and backend.

d. Git Version Control

• Why Required:

To track code changes, work collaboratively, and manage branches during development.

e. Responsive Design and Cross-Browser Compatibility

• Why Required:

To ensure the platform works seamlessly across all devices and browsers.

f. Basic Understanding of Authentication and Authorization

• Why Required:

To implement user authentication (e.g., login, signup) and protect API routes using JWT or similar technologies.

3. System Requirements

- Operating System: Windows, macOS, or Linux.
- **Processor**: Minimum dual-core (quad-core recommended).
- RAM: 8GB (minimum), 16GB or more for better performance.
- **Disk Space**: At least 10GB for installing software and storing project files.

4. Development Workflow Prerequisites

- Package Managers: Familiarity with npm or yarn for installing project dependencies.
 - o Example: npm install to install dependencies from package.json.
- Environment Variables: Knowledge of setting up .env files to securely manage sensitive information like database credentials, API keys, and JWT secrets.
- Error Handling and Debugging: Ability to use tools like Chrome DevTools, console logs, and Node.js debugging tools.

4.2 Installation:

The installation process involves setting up the project on your local machine, installing necessary dependencies, and configuring the environment.

1. Prerequisites Check

Ensure the following are installed on your system:

- Node.js (download from Node.js).
- MongoDB (download from MongoDB).
- Git (download from Git).
- A code editor, such as Visual Studio Code (download from <u>VS Code</u>).

2. Clone the Repository

1. Open your terminal or command prompt.

Navigate to the directory where you want to set up the project:

cd /path/to/your/project/directory

2. Clone the repository using Git: git clone

https://github.com/your-repo/online-learning-platform.git

3. Navigate into the project folder:

cd online-learning-platform

3. Install Dependencies

a. Backend Setup

Navigate to the server folder:

cd server

1. Install the backend dependencies: npm

install

b. Frontend Setup

Navigate to the client folder:

cd ../client

1. Install the frontend dependencies: npm

install

4. Configure Environment Variables

a. Backend Environment (.env File)

Navigate to the server folder:

cd ../server

1. Create a .env file in the server directory:

bash

Copy code

touch .env

2. Add the following configuration details to the .env file:

```
PORT=5000
```

MONGO_URI=mongodb://localhost:27017/online_learning_platform
JWT SECRET=your jwt secret

b. Frontend Environment (.env File)

Navigate to the client folder:

```
cd ../client
```

- 1. Create a .env file in the client directory: touch .env
- 2. Add the following configuration details to the .env file:

```
REACT APP API URL=http://localhost:5000/api
```

5. Start the Application

a. Start the Backend Server

Navigate to the server folder:

- 1. Start the server: npm run dev
- 2. Confirm the server is running on http://localhost:5000.

b. Start the Frontend Server

1. Open a new terminal.

```
Navigate to the client folder: cd /path/to/online-
learning-platform/client
```

2. Start the React development server:

bash

npm run dev

3. Confirm the frontend is running on http://localhost:3000.

6. Access the Application

- 1. Open your web browser.
- 2. Visit http://localhost:3000 to view the frontend.
- 3. Verify that the backend API is working by visiting http://localhost:5000/api.

7. Testing the Setup

- 1. Check if the frontend communicates with the backend (e.g., user registration or course listing functionality).
- 2. Use **Postman** or **cURL** to test API endpoints on the backend, such as GET /api/courses.

8. Optional: Run MongoDB

Ensure MongoDB is running on your local machine:

Mongod

Alternatively, if using MongoDB Atlas, ensure your MONGO_URI in the .env file is correctly set up.

9. Common Issues and Fixes

- Port Conflict: If 5000 is in use, update the .env or configuration files to use a different port.
- Missing Dependencies: Re-run npm install in both server and client folders.
- **MongoDB Not Running**: Ensure MongoDB is running locally or that the connection string points to a valid database.

5. Folder Structure :

Client (React Frontend)

fro	ntend/
	public/
 	index.html # Main HTML file for the React app
	- assets/ # Images, icons, and other static assets
	components/
	— admin/ # Components for admin functionality
	AdminHome.jsx
	common/ # Components shared across different roles
	AxiosInstance.js
	— Dashboard.jsx
	│
	Login.jsx
	│
1	— student/ # Components for student functionality
	CourseContent.jsx
	EnrolledCourses.jsx
	L StudentHome.jsx
I	│
1	AddCourse.jsx
	TeacherHome.jsx

Server (Node.js Backend)

backend/ — config/	
Config/	
└── connect.js	# MongoDB connection setup
controllers/	
adminController.js	# Logic for admin actions
userController.js	# Logic for user actions
— middlewares/	
authMiddleware.js	# Authentication middleware
— models/	
userModel.js	# User schema
courseModel.js	# Course schema
coursePaymentModel.js	# Course payment schema
enrolledCourseModel.js	# Enrolled course schema
— routers/	
adminRoutes.js	# Routes for admin actions
userRoutes.js	# Routes for user actions
- uploads/	# Folder for storing uploaded
files	
env	# Environment variables (MongoDB
URI, JWT secret, etc.)	
— index.js	# Main server entry point
— package.json	# Backend dependencies and
Scripts	

6. Running the Application

6.1 Frontend

To start the React frontend:

Navigate to the client directory:

cd client

1. Install dependencies: npm

install

2. Start the development server:

npm run dev

3. The frontend will usually run on http://localhost:3000 by default.

6.2 Backend

To start the Node.js backend:

Navigate to the server directory:

cd server

1. Install dependencies: bash

Copy code npm

install

2. Set up environment variables:

Create a .env file in the server directory if it doesn't already exist. Add necessary configurations

like:

PORT=5000

MONGO URI=mongodb://localhost:27017/yourDatabase

```
JWT_SECRET=yourSecretKey
Start the server:
npm run dev
```

3. The backend will usually run on http://localhost:5000 by default.

Running Both Frontend and Backend Concurrently

For ease of development, you can run both the frontend and backend servers simultaneously. If you are using a tool like **concurrently**

Install it in the root directory:

```
npm install concurrently --save-dev
```

1. Update your root package.json scripts:

```
ison
```

Copy code

```
"scripts": {
   "start": "concurrently \"npm start --prefix client\" \"npm start
--prefix server\""
}
```

- 2. Run both servers: npm run dev
- 3. Now both the frontend and backend will be running together!

7. API Documentation:

- Development: http://localhost:5000/api
- Production: <your-production-url>/api

Authentication Endpoints

1. User Registration

Endpoint: /auth/register

• Method: POST

Request Body:

```
json
{
    "name": "John Doe",
    "email": "johndoe@example.com",
    "password": "yourpassword"
}
```

• Response Example:

Success:

```
json
{
    "message": "User registered successfully",
    "user": {
        "id": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd12",
        "name": "John Doe",
        "email": "johndoe@example.com"
    }
}
Error:
json
{
```

```
"error": "Email already exists"
}
```

2. User Login Endpoint:

/auth/login

• Method: POST

Request Body:

```
json
{
   "email": "johndoe@example.com",
   "password": "yourpassword"
}
```

• Response Example:

Success:

```
json
{
    "message": "Login successful",
    "token": "your-jwt-token",
    "user": {
        "id": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd12",
        "name": "John Doe"
    }
}
Error:
json
{
    "error": "Invalid credentials"
}
```

User Endpoints

3. Get User Profile

```
Endpoint: /user/profile

• Method: GET

Headers:
json
{
    "Authorization": "Bearer your-jwt-token"
}

Response Example:
json
{
    "id": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd12",
    "name": "John Doe",

    "email": "johndoe@example.com",
    "role": "student"
}
```

Course Endpoints

4. Get All Courses

Endpoint: /courses

• Method: GET

Response Example:

```
"description": "Learn the fundamentals of React.js",
    "instructor": "Jane Smith",
    "price": 49.99
  },
    "id": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd56",
    "title": "Node.js Essentials",
    "description": "Master the basics of Node.js",
    "instructor": "John Doe",
    "price": 39.99
]
5. Enroll in a Course Endpoint:
/courses/enroll
   • Method: POST
Headers:
ison
  "Authorization": "Bearer your-jwt-token"
}
Request Body:
json
{
  "courseId": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd34"
Response Example:
json
{
  "message": "Enrolled successfully",
  "course": {
```

```
"id": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd34",
    "title": "React Basics"
}
```

Error Response Format

All errors will have the following format:

```
json
{
   "error": "Description of the error"
}
```

8. Authentication:

8.1 Authentication and Authorization Details

Authentication ensures that only registered users can access the platform by verifying their credentials. **Authorization** determines the permissions a user has to access specific resources or perform actions.

• Roles and Permissions:

- 1. Admin:
 - Can manage users, courses, and other resources.
- 2. Instructor:
 - Can create and manage their courses.
- 3. Student:
 - Can view and enroll in courses.

Workflow Overview:

- 1. A user registers or logs in to the platform.
- 2. The server validates the credentials and generates a token (e.g., JWT).
- 3. The client includes the token in the Authorization header for subsequent requests.

4. The server validates the token to ensure the user is authenticated and authorized for the requested resource.

Middleware for Authorization:

Middleware functions are implemented to check if a user is authenticated and authorized to access specific endpoints: javascript

```
const authMiddleware = (req, res, next) => {
  const token = req.headers.authorization?.split(" ")[1]; if (!token)
  return res.status(401).json({ error: "Access denied, token

missing" });

try {
  const verified = jwt.verify(token,
  process.env.JWT_SECRET); req.user = verified; next();
  } catch (err) { res.status(401).json({ error:
    "Invalid token" });
};
```

8.2 Tokens

- JSON Web Tokens (JWT) are used for stateless authentication.
- Upon successful login, the server generates a JWT containing user details and a role.
- The token is signed using a secret key and sent to the client.

Example JWT Payload:

```
json
{
    "id": "64a5c67d1234567890abcd12",
    "name": "John Doe",
    "role": "student",
    "iat": 1692095261,
```

```
"exp": 1692690061
```

• The client stores the token in localStorage or HTTP-only cookies.

The token is included in the Authorization header for every protected request:

```
json
{
   "Authorization": "Bearer your-jwt-token"
}
```

9. User Interface:

Homepage:

The homepage contains:

- An Explore Courses button for browsing available courses.
- A Login option in the navigation bar for existing users.
- A Register option in the navigation bar for new users.

User Roles and Functionalities:

Teacher Interface:

Homepage:

- Displays a list of all courses created by the teacher.
- Includes an option to delete courses.
- Shows the number of students enrolled in each course.

Add Courses:

 Allows teachers to create new courses using a structured form with details such as course title, description, and content.

Student Interface:

Homepage:

- Displays a list of all available courses.
- Includes a filtering option to differentiate between free and paid courses.

• Students can view course descriptions and enroll in courses.

Enrolled Courses Section:

- Displays a list of courses the student has enrolled in.
- Students can access course content from this section.
- Provides an option to download certificates upon completing a course.

Admin Interface:

Admin Dashboard:

• Displays an overview of all registered users (teachers and students) and courses.

User Management:

- Admin can view all users (teachers and students).
- Admin can delete users if necessary.

Course Management:

- Admin can view all courses.
- Admin can delete courses if necessary.

10. Testing:

10.1 Tool used: Postman API

Teacher:

- Add Course: 'POST /api/teacher/courses' Create a new course. Check if all fields are valid.
- Delete Course: `DELETE /api/teacher/courses/{courseId}` Remove a course if no students are enrolled.
- Add Section: 'POST /api/teacher/courses/{courseId}/sections' Add a section to a specific course.

Student:

- Enroll in Course: `POST /api/student/courses/{courseId}/enroll` Enroll in a selected course.
- Resume Course: `GET /api/student/courses/{courseId}/resume` Continue from the last stopped section. Download Certificate: `GET /api/student/courses/{courseId}/certificate` Download certificate upon completion.
- Filter Courses: `GET /api/student/courses?name=Programming` Search courses by name or category.

Admin:

- View All Users: 'GET /api/admin/users' - Retrieve a list of all students and teachers.

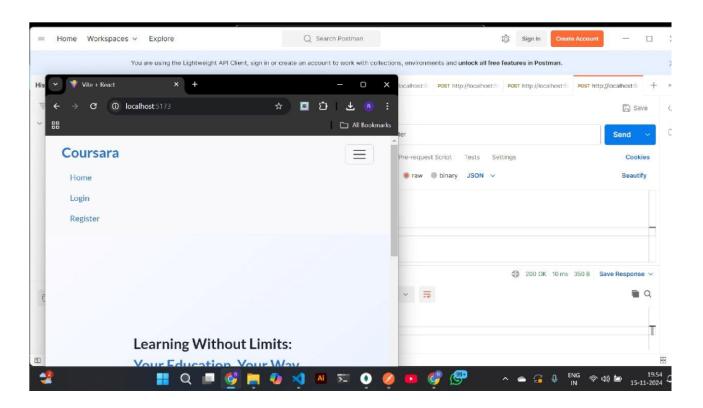
- Modify Course: `PUT /api/admin/courses/{courseId}` Update course details.
- View Enrollments: `GET /api/admin/enrollments` View student enrollment records for each course.

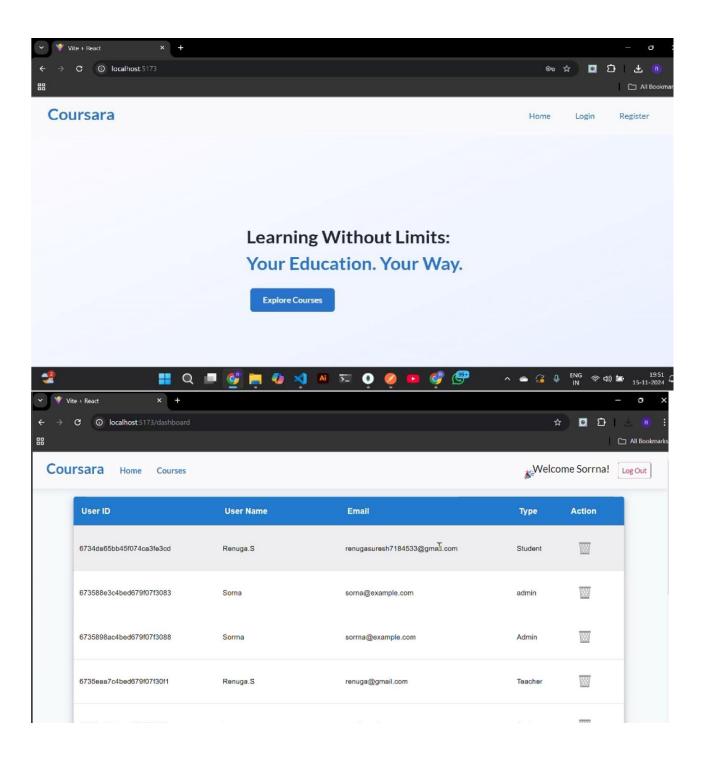
Testing Strategies

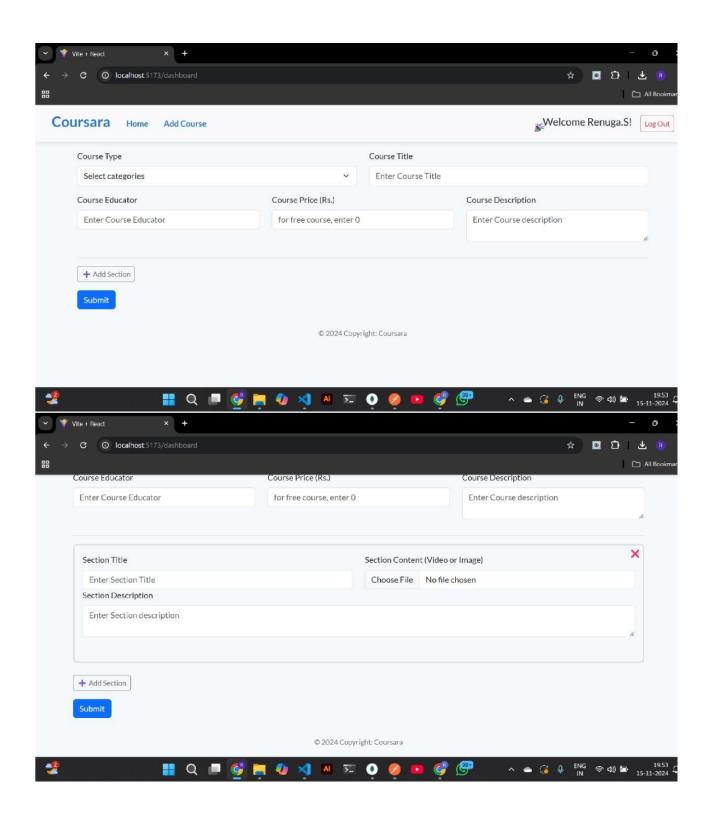
- 1. Manual Testing: Test API endpoints by manually setting HTTP methods, headers, and body data.
- 2. **Test Collections**: Group related requests into collections for better organization and reusability.
- 3. **Environment Variables**: Use variables (e.g., { {base_url}}, { {auth_token}}) for different environments.
- 4. Automated Testing: Write test scripts in Postman to validate response status, structure, and data.
- 5. Chaining Requests: Pass data between requests by storing response values in variables.

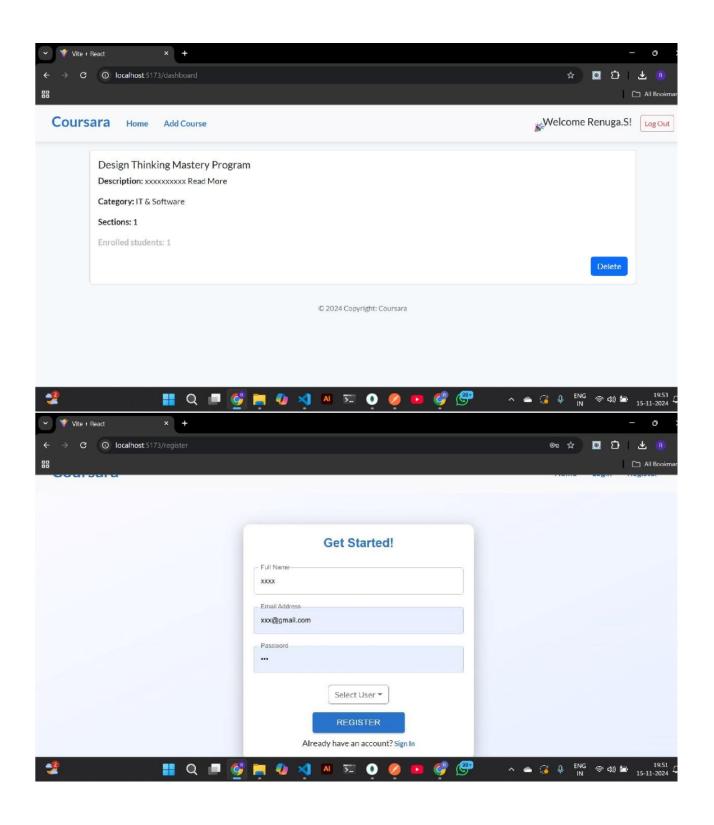
Postman streamlines API testing with automation and organization tools.

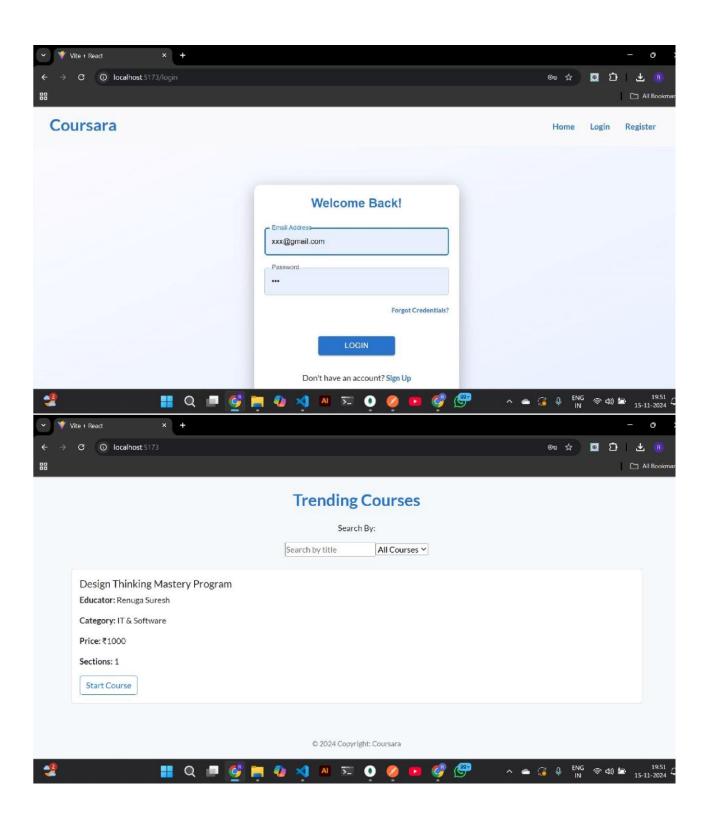
11. Screenshots:

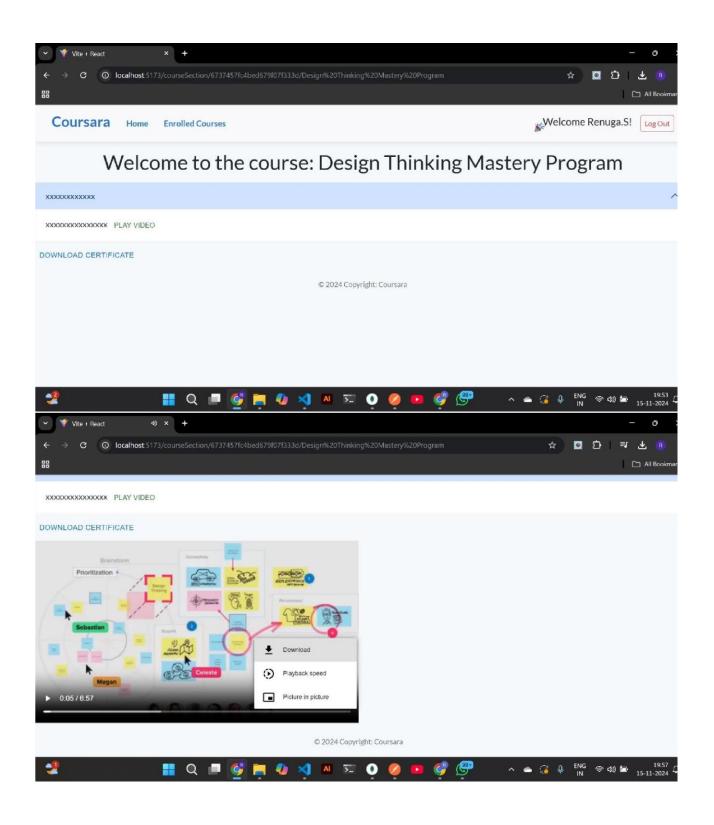


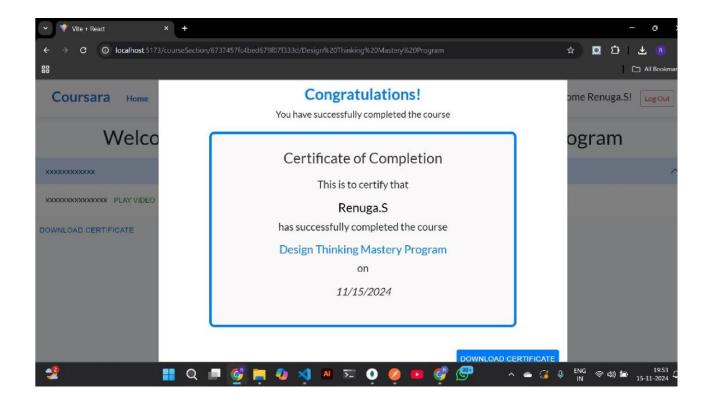












12. Known Issues:

Slow Loading Times:

- **Issue**: Courses containing heavy multimedia content (videos, images, documents) may take longer to load, causing a delay in the user experience.
- Cause: Large file sizes, inefficient media delivery methods, or network issues could contribute to slow loading.
- **Solution**: Implement media optimization techniques such as compressing images and videos, using a content delivery network (CDN), or lazy loading media to improve performance.

Limited Payment Options:

- **Issue**: Currently, only credit card and PayPal are supported for payment for paid courses, limiting the flexibility for users who prefer other payment methods.
- Cause: The integration is restricted to these two options due to current platform capabilities.
- **Solution**: Expand the payment gateway to support more options like Stripe, Google Pay, Apple Pay, or bank transfers to cater to a wider user base.

Occasional UI Glitches:

- **Issue**: Minor display inconsistencies and glitches may appear when accessing the application from different browsers or devices.
- Cause: Cross-browser compatibility issues, CSS inconsistencies, or outdated browser versions.
- Solution: Test and refine the frontend for cross-browser compatibility, and ensure responsive design
 principles are applied for consistent UI across devices. Encourage users to update browsers for better
 compatibility.

Search Inconsistencies:

- **Issue**: The search functionality may not always return accurate or relevant results when users search for specific keywords.
- Cause: This could be due to issues with how the search algorithm is implemented, keyword indexing, or insufficient data processing.
- Solution: Improve the search algorithm by implementing better indexing, fuzzy search, or adding
 filters to narrow down results. Regularly update the course database to reflect more accurate keyword
 matches.

Certificate Download:

- **Issue**: Some users experience difficulties in downloading certificates, particularly when using older browsers.
- Cause: Compatibility issues between older browsers (e.g., Internet Explorer) and newer technologies used for generating or downloading certificates (e.g., PDF rendering).
- Solution: Ensure certificate download functionality is compatible with modern browsers, and consider providing alternative download formats (e.g., email delivery or HTML download). Encourage users to use updated browsers for the best experience.

13. Future Enhancements:

Mobile App Development:

• **Enhancement**: Create a mobile app version of the platform for better accessibility and user experience on smartphones.

Benefit: A dedicated mobile app will allow users to access courses, watch videos, and interact with
content on the go, improving convenience and accessibility. It will also provide better performance
and offline functionality compared to a mobile website.

Additional Payment Methods:

- **Enhancement**: Integrate more payment options, including digital wallets (e.g., Apple Pay, Google Pay) and bank transfers.
- **Benefit**: Offering a broader range of payment methods will cater to different user preferences and regions, making it easier for users to complete transactions and enhancing overall user satisfaction.

Advanced Analytics for Teachers:

- **Enhancement**: Provide detailed analytics and insights for instructors, including metrics like student progress, engagement rates, and course performance.
- **Benefit**: This feature will enable instructors to track their students' learning journey, identify struggling learners, and adjust course content to improve outcomes. It empowers teachers with data to enhance course quality and support their students more effectively.

Interactive Quizzes:

- **Enhancement**: Integrate quizzes and assessments throughout courses to engage students and test their understanding.
- Benefit: Quizzes provide an interactive way for students to assess their learning, retain information, and stay engaged with the course material. They also give instructors valuable insights into students' comprehension of topics.

Enhanced User Experience (UI/UX):

- **Enhancement**: Implement a more intuitive UI/UX, with features like dark mode and accessibility options (e.g., text resizing, color contrast settings).
- Benefit: A streamlined and user-friendly interface will improve the overall experience for all users,
 making the platform more accessible, particularly for users with visual impairments or preferences for
 dark mode. This will also help attract a broader audience by making the platform more adaptable to
 individual needs.

Course Recommendations:

- Enhancement: Introduce AI-based recommendations that suggest courses to users based on their interests, past enrollments, and learning patterns.
- **Benefit**: AI-driven course recommendations will enhance the user experience by providing personalized learning paths. It helps users discover relevant content they may not have found otherwise, improving course engagement and retention.