

Roadmap for Digital Learning in Higher Education

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TEACHING AND LEARNING IN IRISH HIGHER EDUCATION:
A ROADMAP FOR ENHANCEMENT IN A DIGITAL WORLD 2015-2017



NATIONAL FORUM
FOR THE ENHANCEMENT OF TEACHING
AND LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Why a roadmap?

Why a roadmap?



CHAIR'S Preface

In this document we build on the preliminary roadmap published by the National Forum in May 2014¹ by highlighting key considerations which aim to address the challenges more explicitly.

This extended report has several aims.

- It synthesises the extensive consultation² and research undertaken as part of building the roadmap for digital capacity (digital capacity is defined as a concept that refers generally to the skills, competencies, attitudes, infrastructure and resources that enable people to work, live and learn in a world that is increasingly digital)³.
- It places the collective challenges and implications of digital capacity within a wider framework that connects bottom up and top down pragmatic actions. This framework speaks to our sector's shared vision of 'a [higher education] culture that fully embraces digital learning and digital innovation' (*Digital Roadmap – Phase 1* (2014)).
- It presents focused, action-orientated ways in which such a culture can be achieved, including an identification of **who are the key drivers for the different dimensions of capacity building**.
- It encourages and informs purposeful dialogue between key stakeholders within and across our institutions so that our agreed vision, principles and priorities can be translated into **tangible and transformative actions on the ground**.

The Vision For Digital Capacity In Irish Higher Education

The cross-sectoral consultations that informed our preliminary roadmap gave rise to the articulation of an emerging, shared vision for building digital capacity that aligned with many of the issues and concerns identified in the national strategy for higher education.

The Vision For Digital Capacity

The cross-sectoral consultations that informed our preliminary emerging, shared vision for building digital capacity that aligns with the vision identified in the national strategy for higher education.

The Irish higher education sector will be characterised by providing a HE learning experience and environment in which:

- There is a culture that fully embraces digital learning and digital innovation and its contribution to realising transformative goals articulated in the National Strategy for Higher Education
- Digital platforms, resources and tools are utilised to enhance teaching, learning and assessment, to connect teachers and students, and to increase the level and quality of learning-related communication
- Digital literacy and digital skills for teaching and learning are developed, supported and fully embedded
- Students will have access to a range of technological supports and resources to enhance their learning in a manner that enables them to become lifelong learners in the digital world
- Teachers will be fully enabled to use digital technologies/resources where appropriate, in order to enhance student learning within their disciplines
- Institutions collaborate with each other, and with the schools and further education sectors in order to build digital capacity for teaching and learning, with students as key partners in the process
- Institutions collaborate effectively at the international level in both research and practice relating to technology-enhanced learning, for example through the Erasmus+, and Horizon 2020 initiatives, enabling Irish Higher Education Institutions (HEI) to partner in a global landscape, building connections and developing a reputation internationally for innovation, digital fluency and cooperation

Finding solutions to today's and tomorrow's challenges

Recommendation 1

Strategy with Implementation

Prioritise the strategic development of digital capacity in institutional and national policy and quality frameworks in a way that supports innovation for impact

Recommendation 2

Collaboration

Strengthen and support collaboration within and between institutions, and with different parts of the higher education sector

Develop shared policies and infrastructure that reflect the complexity of an increasingly digital world

Recommendation 3

Changing Practice

Develop a consistent, seamless and coherent digital experience for students in Irish higher education

Actively engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge

Recommendation 4

Using Evidence - based Research

Develop a strong evidence base for enhanced pedagogy

Recommendation 1

Prioritise the strategic development of digital capacity in institutional and national policy and quality frameworks in a way that supports innovation for impact



Recommendation 1

Prioritise the strategic development of digital capacity in teaching and learning and national policy and frameworks in a way that supports innovation for impact

Recommendation 1 – Priorities for Success

- 1 All higher education institutions should develop and make explicit within their institutional strategies the responsibility and structures to support the development and embedding of digital capacity in their teaching and learning activities
- 2 Enhance the national policy infrastructure to ensure that policy approaches are effective enablers of digital capacity building at institutional, inter-institutional and sectoral levels
- 3 Strategy should be informed by a broad, robust and up-to-date evidence base that captures learning from previous and on-going initiatives and is informed by national and international data and case studies
- 4 A co-ordinated, multi-level approach to foster digital literacy, skills and confidence among students at all levels of education needs to be developed

Recommendation 2

Strengthen and support collaboration within and between institutions, and with different parts of the higher education sector; develop shared policies and infrastructure that reflect the complexity of an increasingly digital world





Recommendation 1

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Recommendation 2 – Priorities for Success

- 1 Higher education institutions should work collaboratively to develop processes and policies that enable innovation and development in a regulated and increasingly digital world
- 2 Institutions should pilot stronger team-based approaches (involving teachers, students, IT and academic support staff) to teaching and learning, curriculum design and programme development; new modes of learning and innovation should be integrated from the outset of such pilots
- 3 Higher education institutions should ensure that when reviewing their technological infrastructure they give sufficient regard to the need to continue to build, and sustain the digital technologies that underpin high quality teaching and learning

Recommendation 3

Develop a consistent, seamless and coherent digital experience for students in Irish higher education and actively engage with students and teachers to develop their digital skills and knowledge



Recommendation 3

Develop a consistent, coherent digital education strategy for students in Irish higher education and actively engage with students and teachers to develop digital skills and knowledge

Recommendation 3 – Priorities for Success

- 1 Institutions should have in place clear policies about the use of technology for teaching, learning and assessment activities in order to facilitate a coherent digital experience for students and staff
- 2 The barriers to the development, acquisition and application of digital skills and knowledge among academic staff and students need to be addressed and the relevant structures to actively support such development need to be put in place
- 3 Professional development frameworks and opportunities for developing digital skills and knowledge amongst academic staff and professional staff need to retain a pedagogical focus with an emphasis on learning design
- 4 Ensure that the technologies used do not disadvantage particular groups and that guidelines, recommendations and indeed legislation, (on, for example, accessibility) are adhered to where this is possible/required
- 5 Develop and implement open education principles and practices for Irish education that are aligned with EU policy and emerging international practice

Recommendation 4

**Develop a strong evidence base for
enhanced pedagogy**



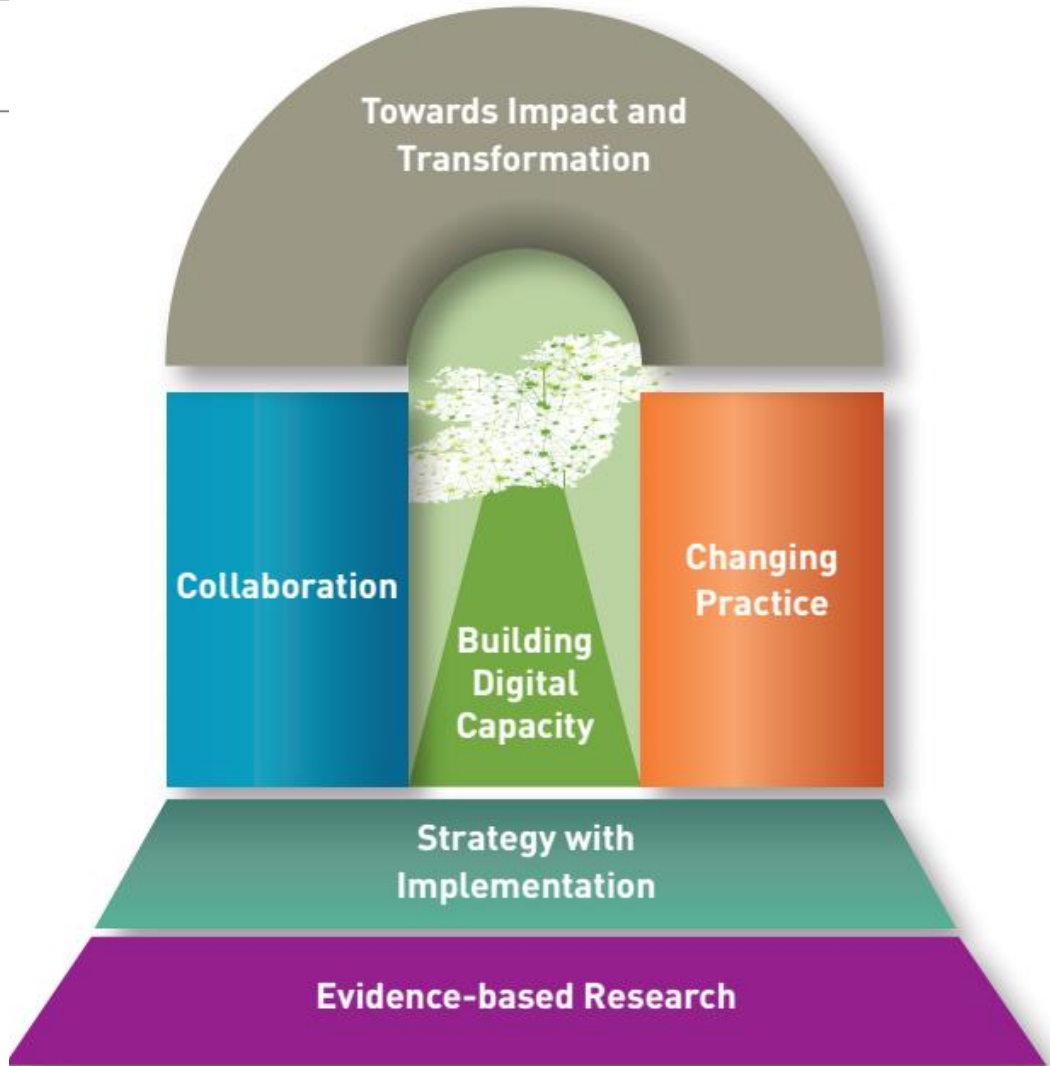
Recommendation 3

Develop a strong evidence base to support enhanced pedagogy

Recommendation 4 – Priorities for Success

- 1 Encourage and facilitate high impact, (internationally recognised) scholarship in digital pedagogy and build links with international communities of research through the development of an infrastructure/framework at national level**
- 2 Prioritise the development across the sector of high impact practices that leverage the potential of digital technologies to support student learning and substantially contribute to evidencing pedagogical excellence**
- 3 Foster and develop an informed approach across the sector, towards the potential of data analytics to inform pedagogical enhancements whilst giving due regard to the importance of process integrity for gathering and analysing such information**
- 4 Ensure that workload models adequately reflect the need for reflection on, scholarship in, and creative exploration of, digital capacity building, new pedagogies and learning/data analytics**

The National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning makes a commitment to ongoing consultation and review of the roadmap to ensure that there is continued progress towards building digital capacity across the Irish higher education sector.



Key Developments since 2014

A number of pre-specified, nationally co-ordinated projects, scoped by experts across the sector, were conducted:

- The technological infrastructure of Irish higher education
- The policy landscape for digital teaching and learning in Ireland
- Learning analytics and educational data mining for learning impact

Publications forthcoming

Senior Management Perspectives (2017)

Twenty-six of 30 senior managers consulted indicated that 'digital capacity' permeates discussion of strategy and planning in their respective institutions.

All indicated progress in at least one of the following aspects of change:

- Embedding of digital practices more deeply where they were already established
- Extending the reach of existing practices to encompass a greater number of staff, students and modules
- Scaling up of online course provision to meet flexible learning needs and to open up access to a wider range of programmes



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